The Power of Story and Ecological Consciousness: Five Twentieth-Century Films

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The Centre for Environmental Studies
University of Tasmania
April 2000

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Abstract

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This interdisciplinary thesis explores ecological issues and values in relation to five films and associated literature, thereby including film as an extension of the recently consolidated field of ecocriticism, also known as ecological literary (or film) criticism.

The main purpose of the thesis is to highlight the ways in which stories, particularly filmic stories, affect our culture and our ecology. The five films examined in the thesis, *The Crucible, Oscar and Lucinda, The Piano, Jesus of Montreal,* and *Blade Runner,* are mainstream but they do not necessarily reflect Hollywood mainstream values. Any work, fiction or non-fiction, novel or film, may be viewed through the prism of ecocriticism, but the denser, more layered and intertextual a film, the greater the opportunity it provides for the study of ecological issues and values.

Biblical stories encompass the life cycle of humanity and are major sources of material in mythology, literature, and film, all of which have a powerful effect on our society, our culture, and our understanding of the world in which we live. Our attitudes and actions are shaped by stories, but not always for the better. Chemical and genetic engineering corporations and their public relation experts, for example, do not usually create stories that benefit ecological systems.

Each of the films is anthropocentric, presented for entertainment and box-office success, with nature sometimes seen as background to the story, and sometimes playing a stronger role. A combination of factors are likely to contribute to a viewer's response to nature and the ecological issues and values in the under-layers of the films, including the contribution of multi-media information related to local and global ecological issues. The truism that nothing works in isolation is relevant. The ongoing popularity of the films studied has attracted numerous and various opinions and deepening insights - hence the ongoing debates, websites, essays, novels and anthologies. Because stories have power and film is a popular mediator of story, the thesis concludes that ecocritical analysis of mainstream film is one of many ways that can contribute to a deepening of ecological consciousness.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

I wish to acknowledge the influence of my supervisor Reader Peter Hay and the inspiration I received from his 'values' lectures and throughout my Masters and PhD work in Environmental Studies. His support of my interdisciplinary studies enabled me to bring my many interests together. My co-supervisor for this thesis, Elaine Stratford, helped to bring order and an ending to work that at times seemed interminable. For this, as well as the support and friendship both supervisors have given to me, my sincere thanks.

Jean Troy-Smith, Assistant Professor Suny University, New York, helped me to return to my studies after a mid-thesis period of sickness, and to conclude them when she visited Hobart. I thank her for her contribution in editing the thesis as well as her friendship and support since our meeting at the first ASLE conference in Colorado.

My thanks are general but deeply felt towards my colleagues at the Centre of Environmental Studies, and at Cohousing where I live. To Jayne Balmer my gratitude for her assistance when I most needed it; also to Peter Wilde, Lesley Raaen, Jan Howard and Derek Verrall, and others who read and discussed parts of the thesis and assisted me when my stubborn resistance to technological updating created dilemmas.

Contents:

But now ask the beasts,
and they will teach you;
And the birds of the air,
and they will tell you;
Or speak to the earth,
and it will teach you;
And the fish of the sea
will explain to you
- Job 13,12:7

Introduction

This thesis continues interdisciplinary study commenced in my Master's degree, *The Archetypal Quest and Moby-Dick: Melville's 'Ecological Cosmic Democracy'* (1993). In this current work ecological literary criticism (ecocriticism) is extended to include the medium of film. Film is a very recent addition to ecocriticism's interdisciplinary range, which includes literature, science, psychology, history, feminism, religious, and cultural studies.[1] The lens of ecocriticism is used in order to explore ecological issues and values in five twentieth century mainstream films which are set in the past, the present and the future:[2] *The Crucible* (US 1996), set in the seventeenth century; *Oscar and Lucinda* (Australia 1996), and *The Piano* (Australia 1993), both set in the nineteenth century; *Jesus of Montreal* (Canada 1986), set in the twentieth century; and *Blade Runner*, the 'Director's Cut' (US 1992), set in the twenty-first century. Each of the films is allocated a chapter in this text. The purpose of the thesis is to examine filmic and associated literary texts in an endeavour to discover the ways in which each informs the other, and their combined effects on our culture and ecology.

The slow work of thesis writing is a torment to a mature-age student who believes that direct activism is a vital part of working towards a change in lifestyles and relationships with the nonhuman

[1] The term 'ecocriticism' is believed to have been first coined by William Rueckert (1996, 105-123).

[2] For my purposes this means films that are shown in mainstream cinema and available on video-cassette, although generally the term could mean Hollywood films which perpetuate Hollywood ideologies.

world. My move into film study occurred because I believe that the trickle-down effect of theory is slow, too slow for a world experiencing rapid and frequently degrading change. Using film - a medium to which students respond in positive ways - academic insights, will I believe, flow faster and more freely to younger students, and contribute to the various activisms required for sustainable lifestyles and ecological praxis.

It has been my good fortune to work in a Centre for Environmental Studies where the 'trangressions' (Beer 1992, 4-5) of interdisciplinary work have been actively encouraged. Gillian Beer was cautious in her endorsement of interdiscipinary studies during her inaugural lecture at Cambridge (1991). She pointed out that we should look with a sceptical eye when governments urge interdisciplinarity as the effect of all this may be fewer people taking on more roles, unless such enterprise is accompanied by adequate funding of *time* (1992, 4). Beer also clarified in her lecture the distinction between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work:

> They have different strengths. Multidisciplinary work valuably brings to bear diverse kinds of expertise on a particular known problem and seeks its solution. Interdisciplinary work crosses over between fields: it transgresses. It thus brings into question the methods and materials of different intellectual practices and may uncover problems disguised by the scope of established disciplines (1992, 4-5).

Interdisciplinary work is now considered essential by many ecocritics, including Anne Primavesi, who writes: '[j]ust as we need the diversity of Nature to sustain life, we need the work of other disciplines to articulate and sustain vision' (1991, 265). Glen Love considers that '[i]nterdisciplinarity, for all its difficulties and potential for misuse, seems the only rational method for bridging

the gulf, first popularised by C. P. Snow forty years ago, between the two cultures of the sciences and the humanities'. He quotes Joseph Meeker: 'the interdisciplinary movement is not a fad, but a response to the growing need among people everywhere to find a sense of integrity for their own lives and for their understanding of the world around them' (cited in Love 1999, 562).

In 'Science, Anti-Science, and Ecocriticism' Love writes about a resistance to science by students of literature (1999b, 65-82). My experience in a department of Geography and Environmental Studies has been the reverse, a resistance on the part of scientists to literature, though less so to film; in fact there is an *enthusiasm* for films such as *Blade Runner,* which some students have seen several times. Consequently, one of my aims in study and teaching has been to broaden my reach, for example, by attempting to encompass the science students who turn up *en masse* to a seminar on *Blade Runner,* but do not demonstrate the same positive response to literature simply because most prefer to observe rather than to read. Many people fail to see interdisciplinary connections, and the visual nature of film helps to bridge the gaps between science and the humanities, and theory and practice.[3]

My selection of the five films mentioned above was not for their explicitly ecological content but rather for the density of their filmic texts which gave me scope to explore the issues and values beneath the surface content of the films. Their commonalities were not at first apparent, yet religious and scientific themes and themes of

[3] 'What on earth has *Moby-Dick* got to do with Environmental Studies?' was a question asked by Environmental Studies students prior to a seminar I was about to give on this novel. (The novel demonstrates Herman Melville's metaphoric links of human and nonhuman nature. Ishmael, unlike Ahab, survives because he recognises the interconnectedness of species; he no longer hunts the whale, or seeks to know it by its parts, because he recognises it as part of the whole of interconnected life).

oppression and colonialism underlie each of the films. Biblical stories in particular have had an immense influence upon Western culture,[4] and when I looked more closely at the films there were those stories once again: the story of Creation and of Adam, Eve, and the Fall from Paradise, interwoven with other mythology, folk tales, and literature that has continued its evolutionary journey into the present.[5] Just as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and other myths have syncretised with biblical stories, so the Bible and its themes have flowed into Western literature, shaping the archetypes and themes that permeate our language, our dreams, our culture, and our story-telling.[6] Even *Blade Runner* - a science-fiction become cult movie - much discussed for its relevance to postmodernism, is a story of the Fall, with mythological and biblical stories part of the film's intertextuality.[7]

Syncretism - a combination of beliefs, practices, religion or

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[4] Study of the Bible as literature from an ecocritical perspective has been an edifying incursion into a new field of study for me. My studies have been aided by Alexander Cruden's *Complete Concordance to the Bible* (1979); Elaine Pagel's *The Gnostic Gospels* (1990); The New (inclusive) Testament (1995); Ernest Sutherland Bates' *Bible to be Read as Literature* (1936); and the work of scholars, such as Rosemary RadfordRuether, Anne Primavesi, Elizabeth Dodson Gray, John Dominic Crossan, Father Paul Collins, John Shelby Spong, and Lynn White Jr.

[5] Biblical issues are discussed in Chapter One.

[6] Because the Bible is understood by many Christians to be the word of God, it is, therefore, also considered sacred. This even though the Bible has been chronologically adapted, translated, and interpreted by many men, in multiple ways, and sometimes for reasons of politics and power. The Bible is not presented according to the chronology in which texts were written, but is arranged for the presentation of a story with a beginning, 'Genesis', and an end, 'Revelation'. 'Genesis' for example, was partly written after The Ten Commandments and the Mosaic Code in 'Exodus'. Both the New and the Old Testaments have been constantly rewritten - from the ancient Greek and Hebrew texts - throughout the centuries, with varying translations and versions of 'truth', long after the events they describe, and frequently in language that is metaphoric rather then literal. Books written from prior to 1000 BC until 100-125 AD went through many changes, both in content and chronology (Bates, 1936, 1234-5).

[7] Marina Warner demonstrates the important effects of literary and filmic texts in her 1994 Reith Lectures, in which she interweaves mythology and folklore with Christian and contemporary stories: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Odyssey*, *Frankenstein*, and the film *Blade Runner*.

philosophy - is not usually welcomed by the Christian Church, but story cannot be restrained.[8] Stories belong to communities of people; they change as the understandings of individuals within those communities change. Stories (like theses) are political, even (or especially) when certain things are deliberately unsaid, or certain people or species are unrepresented. As with evolutionary process, some stories become extinct, others survive, reappearing in unexpected places at unexpected times. The constant repetition of stories - such as biblical stories - helps to maintain their hold in a culture - as most theologians and public relations executives would understand. The Canadian film director Denys Arcand, in particular, recognises and demonstrates the actions, politics and power of stories, the old affecting the new, in *Jesus of Montreal.*

The ways in which we intepret these stories is partly created by the reader or viewer in a symbiotic relationship or 'transactive process', in which 'no interpretation is definitive, multiple possibilities can occur' (Hamilton 1999, 13; Abrams 1981, 150,155). The term for this process is 'reader response' criticism; its companion, 'reception theory', shares an important change in the reading of texts that is welcomed by many feminist and postmodernist theorists. There is no longer an acceptance that there is a master-dominating correctness of a reading, and that there is only one conclusion. There may be 'constraints' in the text that, if ignored, result in misreadings but instead of the traditional fixing of values and meanings, there exists a potential for a changing and cumulative dialogue. 'Films, as works of art (some of which attain "classic status"), resist closure, i.e., it cannot be said of a film that

[8] See Jenkins (1993, 3-4).

it has a single definitive meaning' (Marsh and Ortiz 1998, 3).

The actions of story, and responses to story, are relevant to 'reception theory'[9] which focuses, like other 'reader response' criticism, on the reception of a text. However, 'its interest is not on the single reader at a given time, but on the changing responses - interpretive and evaluative - of the general reading [or viewing] public to the same text or texts, over a span of time' (Abrams 1981, 155). The myriad experiences of peoples' lives, and the contexts of their sexual and gendered experiences - as well as their political desires - affect their interpretations of what they see, hear and feel.[10] For theologians, however, diversity of interpretation brings with it radical diversity of belief and whilst many forms of postmodernism seem to recommend a limitlessness to interpretative freedom, theology is unlikely to be taken so far. As Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz write, it 'is thus not so surprising that this possible direction of Christian theology in a postmodern climate is not one shared by all' (1998, 3).

Stories then, important in the shaping of culture and our attitudes to planet Earth, may represent many ideologies, and have many interpretations. Yet it is important to remember that some

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[9] Reception theory is further discussed in Lucy Hamilton's review of the film *Romeo and Juliet* (1999, 12-17).

[10] In its aspect as 'reception-history' this mode of study also transforms the history of literature and film so that instead of the fixed meanings and values of a variety of texts produced in the course of time, it becomes instead 'the history of the changing but cumulative way that selected major works are interpreted and assessed, as the horizons of its successive readers [or viewers] change' (Abrams 1981, 155).

Troy-Smith writes that if the reader integrates past experiences with the experiences created by the text, then the gender and the philosophy of the reader are important. Feminist readings recognise hierarchies and the exclusion of women, and women writers in particular. The readings are motivated by the need to cooperate and connect in ways that link women writers, readers, and critics to the larger community of women (1996, 16).

interpretations can be manipulated to ensure the stability and *status quo* of institutions and those in power, just as they can further the interests of those desiring to be empowered (Jenkins 1993). Marina Warner says that stories can work to conceal political motives and to circulate ideologies but they can also give rise to other stories which can be sewn and woven as patterns in a larger social fabric, and this is a continuous enterprise in which everyone can take part (1994, xiv). Stories, shaped by multiple voices at various times, are developed with imagination and feelings as well as rationality. They are presented in multiple ways, aurally and visually as well as in the written text. Science, religion, and philosophy all contribute to story, as does music, art and craft, and the electronic and printed media. Story is implicit in history - hence the need for interdisciplinary work. To state what may seem obvious, the ways in which we see, hear, think, read and feel, affect our ability to understand the politics and manipulations of story. Part of the work of ecocritics is to highlight what may not be at first apparent in literary or filmic texts.

The inclusion of film study in ecocriticism does not mean the neglect of literature; rather it is an acknowledgment of the visual component of contemporary media representing Western culture. Nicholas Mirzoeff confirms my own experience of changes in our culture:

> While print culture is certainly not going to disappear, the fascination with the visual and its effects that was a key feature of modernism has engendered a postmodern culture that is at its most postmodern when it is visual ... human experience is now more visual and visualised than ever before (Mirzoeff 1998, 4).

Literary sources of film, related literary texts, mythology, and the

Bible are part of our print culture that continue to be part of my study. However, as Mirzoeff points out: 'The disjunctured and fragmented culture we call postmodernism is best imagined and understood visually, just as the nineteenth century was classically represented in the newspaper and the novel' (1998, 5). It is perhaps because of film director Ridley Scott's sense of paradox and irony that Rick Deckard, the protagonist in *Blade Runner*, is first seen in the city reading a *newspaper* with massive neon-lit advertising images flashing all around him. Scott both *resists* and *recognises* the postmodern influences for which the film has been acclaimed (Harvey 1989, 308-323) with his use of pastiche and the mixing of architectural styles and print and visual media in the *mise en scene.* Pastiche is 'a work of art that mixes styles, materials etc., or a work of art in the style of another artist' (Collins 1986, 1124). Like parody, pastiche can satirize another work; it is an imitation that calls attention to the original yet makes no explicit critique of it (Martin and Ostwalt eds 1995, 138). In *Blade Runner*'s pastiche, there is parody and homage to multiple genres: science fiction, such as *Metropolis;* the horror film, such as *Frankenstein;* the apocalyptic film, such as, *Apocalyse Now;* the detective genre, such as the Raymond Chandler movies; and *film noir*[11] such as *Gilda.*[12]

Another important reason for studying popular film is that it provides an opportunity for reflection and commentary on contemporary social attitudes, beliefs, and understandings (Shek 1996, 215), scientific and spiritual,[13] as well as ecological. In the preface of *Explorations in Theology and Film: Movies and*

[11] Paul Sammon titles his book on *Blade Runner, Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* (1996).

[12] Sammon quotes Scott: '... you could say that Rachael was my homage to Gilda' (1996, 383).

Meaning, Martin Scorsese is quoted as recognising film's spiritual significance. Scorsese, director of *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), wanted to be a priest until he decided his real vocation was the movies:

> I don't really see a conflict between the church and the movies, the sacred and the profane. Obviously there are major differences. But I can also see great similarities between a church and a movie-house. Both are places for people to come together and share a common experience. And I believe there's a spirituality in films, even if it is not one that can transplant faith. I find that over the years many films address themselves to the spiritual side of human nature ... it's as if movies answer an ancient quest for the common unconscious. They fulfill a spiritual need that people have: to share a common memory (cited in Marsh and Ortiz 1998, preface).

A story which expresses an important meaning of spirituality for me is in James Bradley's insightful review of *Mr Darwin's Shooter* (Bradley 1998, 23,30). Bradley writes: 'In the novel's cathartic and beautiful epilogue, the dying Covington [Darwin's deeply religious manservant] observes in a dream Mr Darwin on his knees, and there was no difference between prayer and pulling a worm from the grass'. Bradley continues, 'we see a recognition that even after Darwin we can relate to the natural world in a way that is meaningful and, to use the word in its simplest, most profound sense, spiritual' (Bradley 1998, 23,30).[14]

Most of the texts which dominate Western twentieth century literature and film, including the filmic texts that I have selected, are concerned not so much with spirituality, but with love stories and Euro-American human relationships in particular.

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[13] 'Spiritual' is '[r]elated to the spirit or soul and not to physical nature or matter; intangible' (Collins 1986) Susan Cady describes 'spirituality' as 'the actualization of the human capacity for self-transcendence (Cady *et al* 1989).

[14] Darwin, however, described nature as 'clumsy, wasteful and blundering'; he perceived 'all nature at war' (cited in Goldsmith, 2000, 5).

However, ecology,[15] for Bradley and other individuals, extends beyond the physical to the spiritual, and beyond the human species to nonhumans, those beings generally backgrounded in stories and filmic texts. It is not possible to have empathy, understanding, spiritual, or insightful relationships with other beings without imagination. In *The Comedy of Survival*, first published in 1972, Meeker writes that we are 'earth's only literary creatures', because of our abilities to reason and to imagine (1980, 25). Consequently, we carry a responsibility towards the rest of nature. Meeker uses 'literary ecology' as the taxonomic term for what he calls 'this green branch of literary study', which he describes as:

> ... the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species (Meeker 1980, 29).

It is important to remember, however, that even though we may be the world's only *literary* creatures, other beings have ways of expressing themselves, even though we humans are mostly unaware of this because of our limited perceptions. To consider our voices, our texts, and ourselves as supreme is to be guilty of hubris, and hubris - in life as well as mythology - is a human flaw that may become a fatal flaw.

In one of their many roles ecocritics work to combat hubris by highlighting that which is traditionally backgrounded, giving importance to the massive component of the natural world that is *not* human. Just as it is important for ecocritics to examine nature writing and documentary genres, which specifically set out to represent the nonhuman world as well as the human, it is also

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[15] Ecology is a study of the relationships between living organisms and their environment.

important to examine fictional work that is not self-consciously ecological. The *mise en scene*, the representations of time, place, human and nonhuman nature, and the issues, values, religious and spiritual questions that are raised or ignored in the films, supply ample content for ecocriticism even when the author or *auteur*, has no intention of presenting an ecological perspective.

Set between the seventeenth century (*The Crucible*) and the future of 2019 (*Blade Runner*), each of the films, in overt and covert ways, alerts the observant viewer to past, present, and future scenarios that have contributed, or can contribute, to the healing or the degradation of human community and the diversity of life on Earth. Much of the thesis seeks out the *under-stories* that resonate through the overt love-stories that occur in each film. Love-stories have an evolutionary potential: they are also more likely to make the films a 'success'. *The Crucible* and *Jesus of Montreal* contain explicitly religious themes; however, in *Oscar and Lucinda, The Piano,* and *Blade Runner,* religion is a covert part of the story-telling, although the allegorical dimensions
that are present in these films symbolise deeper moral or spiritual meanings, inner landscapes as well as exterior landscapes.

The *mise en scene* of the films provide contexts for ecocritical interpretations in which the relationships of people, place, and species are examined. The geography of place varies with each film. *Blade Runner* and *Jesus of Montreal* are set in cities where nature has been, and is being, subsumed by humans and their technology. In *Blade Runner,* 'Offworlds' are being populated because of the dying Earth. Nature as depicted in *The Crucible,*

Oscar and Lucinda, and *The Piano*, is still very much part of the landscape, but land and the Aboriginal occupants, are threatened by new settlers.

The Crucible, directed by Nicholas Hytner (1996), is set in the late seventeenth century and functions as a parallel between McCarthyism and other twentieth century oppressions and the witchcraft craze. The film's major theme is related to the suffering of the oppressed and the inhumane acts brought about when people give up their consciences when suffering from sexual, political and theological pressures. Matters central to the story of *The Crucible* are debated in *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Hammer of Witches, 1486). The treatise, written by two theologians, supported by the Papal Bull of Innocent VIII and by academics respected for their learning and rationality, is used as a tool to enact the biblical injunction that all witches must be killed (Exodus 20:15). The *Malleus* itemises in great detail the ways in which witches can be identified: how signs of their association with the devil can be recognised; how they can bring about storms, tempests and other disorders in nature; and how they should be punished. So-called unruly and lustful women were suspected of conniving with the Devil to bring about the death of babies, impotence in men, and the loss of animals and crops. This cruel period in history was merged with the early years of the so-called Enlightenment, when rationalism began the slow process of overcoming God, Satan and mysticism. Yet, more than 150 years later, the protagonists of *Oscar and Lucinda* are involved in a gamble on God that forms the frame of the story.

The love story of Oscar and Lucinda, a pair of gamblers - one

obsessive, one compulsive, is interwoven with the pledging of their inheritances (Oscar's minimal, Lucinda's large) to transport a glass church. The church, made in Lucinda's glass factory, is to be sent from Sydney to Boat Harbour in New South Wales, and Oscar believes that it is God's will that he should go with it. Stories within story reach beyond Gillian Armstrong's subversive depiction of Oscar's non-heroic journey to include issues concerning the Church, spirituality, women, land, and Aborigines. The film is set in the mid-nineteenth century, during the colonisation of Australia by European people, their animals, and Christian ministers with their biblical stories. The movement of the story is from civilised places to wild places in which people and places suffer from the ignorance of cedar cutters, travellers, and other colonists. Aborigines play only minor roles in *Oscar and Lucinda* but the film, nevertheless, represents the historic appropriation of land and European cruelty towards the indigenous people.

Colonialism is also a sub-theme in Jane Campion's film, *The Piano.* Unlike the few defenceless Aborigines in *Oscar and Lucinda,* murdered on their land, Maori characters resist the European colonists who attempt to 'steal' their land by unfair trading with buttons, guns and blankets. Land plays a leading role in the film as Campion consciously links people and place with sensitive cinematography and *mise en scene.* Campion, like Armstrong in *Oscar and Lucinda,* explores the dominations of women, indigenous people and the land through a triangular relationship. The protagonist, Ada McGrath, mute, yet strong-willed, leaves her home in Scotland with her daughter Flora to travel to New Zealand. She is to meet her husband, Alistair Stewart, for the

first time. Their meeting foreshadows a difficult journey when her husband refuses to transport Ada's beloved piano from the beach where it has been delivered to his home. The piano is a metonym for Ada, it is her 'voice' as well as her attachment to her mother and the home she has left. Themes associated with language, silence and the gaze are interwoven in a blending of gothic and romantic genres, providing a depth to the film that has been both challenging and intriguing to viewers and theorists. *The Piano,* set in New Zealand in the mid-nineteenth century is followed by an equally complex and layered story set in contemporary Montreal, *Jesus of Montreal.*

Director Denys Arcand counterposes science and religion in *Jesus of Montreal* by bringing together a first century Passion Play (a play within the film) with a twentieth century evolutionary story of the cosmos, the 'big bang'. Five French-Canadian actors perform in the contemporary film as they research and perform their roles for the Play. The two stories merge as the characters become involved with social, moral, philosophical, religious, spiritual, and scientific issues in the time of Jesus, and find echoes in their own lives. Daniel works against oppressive institutions and systems as Jesus did. He discovers the truths of story-telling - as well as the fallacies - when he researches the story of Jesus. In this film, more than the other four, the director, Arcand, demonstrates the power of story on peoples' lives - particularly the story of Jesus. By contrasting stories Arcand also exposes the ways in which stories are constructed and politically manipulated, now and in the past. Arcand makes the important point that stories, scientific and religious stories, change throughout time as our

understandings of the world in which we live also change.

Blade Runner's vision of the future of 2019 links past worlds with future worlds in a dystopian vision that is also analogous with the society of today - a global society in ecological crisis - with governments and corporations intent on technological progress and 'fixes'. The film, directed by Ridley Scott, confirms the warnings so eloquently delivered by Carson in *Silent Spring* that have been ignored at the peril of all species. In *Blade Runner* Earth is dying, the birds have ceased to sing. People are manufactured by Tyrell Corporation as replicants: the 'more human than human' copies designed as slaves for 'Offworld' communities. When the replicants develop the feelings that have become deficient in humans this blurs the boundaries between what is human and what is artificial. Indeed the major question the film poses is what does it mean to be truly human? This question is part of the dialogue that has continued to absorb *Blade Runner* followers for more than fifteen years as it taps into dreams, memory, and mythology, the past as well as the future, supplying ongoing material for interdisciplinary studies and reception theory.

The constraints of the thesis are the usual ones in any exploration of a new field of study, such as ecological film theory; related literature is minimal and has become available only in recent years. The next chapter outlines the interdisciplinary theory that is used to support the thesis. Included are definitions, references and an analysis of the ecocritical literary texts used in the exploration of these five filmic texts.

Chapter One
A Conceptual Framework: Definitions, Issues and Values

The consolidation of ecocriticism started with the work of a small group of enthusiasts, including Cheryll Glotfelty (then Burgess), Michael Branch and Scott Slovic, all of whom I was able to meet at the first ASLE (Association for the Study Literature and Environment) Conference on Literature and Environment, held in Colorado, 1995. This group of ecocritics has expanded and spread to other countries, but still the greatest body of ecocritical work is Euro-American. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* is a particularly useful guide in the relatively new field of ecocriticism (Glotfelty and Fromm eds. 1996). Chapters in the *Reader* provide an ongoing resource, including Lynn White Jr's essay, 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', first published in 1967 (White 1996, 3-14); Christopher Manes' 'Nature and Silence' (Manes 1996, 15-29); and Vera L. Norwood's 'Heroines of Nature', which includes Carson as a heroine (Norwood 1996, 323-350).

White, in his much debated classic paper, sees 'our ecological crisis as the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture' (1996, 6); and the despiritualisation of nature in Judeo-Christianity as a root cause of this ecological crisis. This essay provided my entré into biblical study, a study important to my current thesis. Manes' work is a reminder of 'the uncounted voices of nature', the 'language of the birds, the wind, earthworms, wolves, and waterfalls ...' (1996, 15). However, it is to Carson that I am most indebted. Her courageous contribution - as a biologist and story

teller - and continuous work for nonhumans as well as humans, and her courage in withstanding the institutions and chemical companies that attempted to silence her, has been influential both in my way of living and the writing of my thesis.[16]

My requests during the late years of the last century for sources of ecological film studies on the ASLE electronic mail drew an unusual blank in this responsive network. Although work linking ecology and film certainly exists, none is included in the *Ecocriticism Reader*. Recent years have been more fruitful, with the publication of several studies of film and ecology. The *ASLE* journal, *ISLE* (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*), has proved useful for my studies, but again, not in relation to film. It was not until the Winter 1999 edition that ASLE included film with an article by Scott MacDonald, 'Ten (Alternative) films and Videos on American Nature' (1-14). *ISLE* , edited by Scott Slovic, was first edited by Patrick D. Murphy. Murphy includes an ecocritical film study, '"The Whole World was Swept Clean": The Androcentric Animation of Denatured Disney' (Murphy 1995b, 125-136).[17] in an anthology, From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender and Culture (Bell, Haas, and Sells, eds, 1995). Two anthologies of film theory became available to me towards the end of the writing of the thesis: *Retrofitting Blade Runner: Issues in Ridley Scott's Blade Runner and Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep,* edited by Judith B. Kerman (1997); and *Piano Lessons: Approaches to The Piano* (1999) edited by Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmel. In Kerman's anthology explicit ecocritical content in the essays is

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[16] See '*Blade Runner* and *Silent Spring*', chapter six.

[17] Murphy produced *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* in the same year (1995).

minimal - 'nature' and 'environment' are discussed only occasionally. The major questions raised by the film are associated with what it means to be human and what it means to be nonhuman, and these are undoubtedly ecocritical questions. Coombs and Gemmel's selection of essays encompasses gender, cultural and colonialist issues, and these are also useful for an ecocritical analysis of film.[18]

bell hooks' insights in *From Reel to Real* provide a reminder of the past lack of leading roles in the film industry for coloured people, particularly women; and of the neglect of feminism in pinpointing and counteracting this lack (1996, 338-343). There are now exceptions to this; for example, the Australian film, *Radiance*, directed by Rachel Perkins, an Aboriginal woman, has three strong, female Aboriginal leading characters and was selected for the opening night of the 1998 Melbourne Film Festival, and the New Zealand film, *Once Were Warriors*, cast Maori characters in powerful leading roles.

Outlets for my own ecocritical writing have been *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* (1995, 204-206; 1997, 170-174),[19] then edited by Alan R. Drengson, and *Siglo* (1994, 14-19), then edited by Francisco Ascui. *The Trumpeter*, now 'on-line', and without Drengson, has provided ecosophical insights and inspirational essays which have influenced my work for many years. Without ecosophy, that is, 'ecological wisdom' (Drengson 1990, 1-2), which includes imagination and sensitivity to the ways in which humans have damaged their

[18] *Piano Lessons* was not available from the publisher until February 2000, so my time to use this book was limited. *Retrofitting Blade Runner*, was out of print when I first needed it but a second print run became available to me in 1998.

[19] Essays relate to the films *The Piano* and *Blade Runner*.

relationships with the nonhuman world, action to improve ecological conditions is impossible.

Nature and Culture

Jhan Hochman's work on ecology and film, *Green Cultural Studies: Nature in Film, Novel, and Theory* (1998), is ground-breaking work in ecological film theory, in part for his thoughtful consideration of postmodernism, cultural *praxis*, and his definitions of nature and culture in relation to film. Hochman writes that 'paying special attention to depictions of nature in film, novel, and theory ... can cast new light, not only on texts but on makers, movements and mediums' (1998, 2). Hochman studies nature - often configured as mere background - in relation to texts; as well as the contribution of represented animals, plants, and land, to theme, narrative structure, and character.

Recognising that his 'definitions are not airtight,' I have adopted Hochman's definitions of nature as described in his 'Introduction' (1998, 2-3). He defines Nature as 'when the word is used *by others* in its essences of Power or Force, Laws, demiurge or deity, System or Intention, Essence, in short ... nature construed as transcendentally metaphysical or immanently essential'; whereas *nature* and *worldnature* 'is used in a more worldly fashion in order to collectivize individual plants, nonhuman animals, and elements'; and to avoid 'otherwordly or transcendental associations with nature'. Hochman includes human animals and their activities within the terms nature/worldnature, but this infrequently and only 'with ample clarification'. This strategy, Hochman believes,

'is not to once again reclassify humans as apart from and superior to animals or to the rest of nature, but to make it politically difficult for humans to claim that by simply being part of nature they know what to do about it and with it' (1998, 2-3).

For definitions of culture I refer to Steve Rayner's article: 'A Cultural Perspective on the Structure and Implementation of Global Environmental Agreements'. Rayner writes that:

> the concept of culture starts from the assumption that much of human thought is both social and public ... thinking does not merely take place in the head, but all around us.. We do not think merely with a private metaphysical mind, but with words, pictures, gestures, actions, and both natural and manufactured objects. Culture consists of the framework that we use to impose some sort of order and coherence on the stream of events. In doing so, we sift and alter our sensations of the world. Some perceptions are admitted, some rejected, and others combined or broken down (1991, 79).

Rayner further defines culture as:

> best seen not as a complex of concrete behaviour patterns - customs, usages, renditions, habit clusters - as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms - plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call programs) for governing behaviour (Rayner, 1991, 79).

Ecocriticism and Warnings to Humanity

Ecocritical thought and praxis[20] work to counter the multiple destructive beliefs and practices of Western society. It is a tragic indictment of this society that the dystopian and apocalyptic images presented by world multi-media are of war, global destruction and pollution. In 'Religion at Millennium', Edward Goldsmith describes the process of the destruction of the natural world, which,

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[20] 'A Greek term used by Aristotle in *Poetics* (it is normally rendered by the word 'action') to denote the first principle and soul of tragedy' (Cuddon 1982, 527).

he believes, is proceeding at an ever greater pace:

> It is the inevitable consequence of the whole enterprise to which modern industrial society is so wholly committed: with 'progress' - in other words, economic development - its dominant feature. This process has rarely been defined, but it involves, above all, the systematic substitution of the world of commodified human artifacts - the surrogate world - for the natural world - the real world - the product of 3,000 million years of biological and ecological evolution (Goldsmith 2000, 5).

How is it, though, that there is not an urgent response to the degradation of the natural world? In *God's Last Offer*, Ed Ayres writes about 'a diminishing capacity for astonishment', even though world affairs are, as he says, dramatically out of control (1999, 1). Ayres tells a story of the arrival of the *Endeavour*, under the command of Captain Cook, on the east coast of Australia.[21] The ship and crew encounter a group of Aborigines who take no notice as the *Endeavour* floats past their canoes. They continue fishing without showing any interest or fear. But when small boats are lowered from the *Endeavour* most of the Aborigines react by running into the bush. 'Two naked warriors stood their ground and shouted ... ' (Ayres 1999, 5-6). Whilst the Aborigines had no experience of such a sight, never having seen a ship before, they were accustomed to small boats and knew that they were being invaded. Ayres continues to make his point:

> the 6 billion natives of Earth are in a position very much like the Aborigines of the *Endeavour* encounter. We are being confronted by something so completely outside our collective experience that we don't really see it, even when the evidence is overwhelming. For us that "something" is a blitz of enormous biological and physical alterations in the world that has been sustaining us (1999, 6).

Maybe a reason that we do not act when we see evidence of

[21] Recorded in detail by Joseph Banks, and retold by Robert Hughes (1998).

ecological degradation is because we are overwhelmed by this knowledge - we are numbed by it. A less benign view could be that greed and a lack of compassion for others, including those of future generations, produces an apathy about the present. There are what Ayres calls four revolutionary changes sweeping the world (1999, 1): first, the problem of global warming and the rise in carbon dioxide emissions; second, the accelerating losses of species; thirdly, excessive consumption; and finally, excessive population (1999, 1-45). News of such environmental degradation is not perhaps what many individuals wish to hear, and consequently it is not what some media corporations wish to publish. Below is a segment of a document entitled 'World Scientists' Warning to Humanity':

> No more than one or a few decades remain before the chance to avert the threats we now confront will be lost and the prospects for humanity immeasurably diminished. We the undersigned, senior members of the world's scientific community, hereby warn all humanity of what lies ahead. A great change in our stewardship of the Earth and life on it is required, if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated (cited in Suzuki and McConnell 1997, 4).

The document was released on November 18, 1992, only five months after the largest gathering of heads of state in history at the Earth Summit in Rio. It was signed by more than sixteen hundred senior scientists from seventy-one countries, including over half of all living Nobel Prize winners. The warning lists 'the crises in the atmosphere, water resources, the oceans, the soil, the forests, biodiversity and human overpopulation', yet was ignored by the *Washington Post* and rejected by the *New York Times* (cited in Suzuki and McConnell 1997, 4).

The Church also seems to be slow to respond to the dire ecological situation described by the Nobel Prize scientists, but in the Fall of

1995, *The Trumpeter* published a passionate 'interfaith declaration, 'Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration', the result of a two-year consultation among more than two hundred scholars and representatives of the world's communities of faith:

> The world is in agony. The agony is so pervasive and urgent that we are compelled to name its manifestations so that the depth of the pain may be made clear.
> Peace eludes us ... the planet is being destroyed ... neighbours live in fear .... women and men are estranged from each other ... children die! This is abhorrent.
> We condemn the abuses of the Earth's ecosystems. We condemn the poverty that stifles life's potential; the hunger that weakens the human body; the economic disparities that threaten so many families with ruin.
> We condemn the social disarray of the nations, the disregard for justice which pushes citizens to the margin; the anarchy overtaking our communities, and the insane death of children from violence. In particular we condemn aggression and hatred in the name of religion.
> WE DECLARE:
> We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the comunity of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of the Earth, the air, water and soil.
> We take individual responsibility for all we do. All our decisions, actions, and failures to act have consequences.

Finally the declaration states:

> Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first. We pledge to increase our awareness by disciplining our minds, by meditation, by prayer, or by positive thinking. Without risk and a readiness to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation. Therefore we commit ourselves to this global ethic, to understanding one another, and to socially beneficial, peace-fostering, and nature-friendly ways of life.
> We invite all people
> whether religious or not, to
> do the same (1995, 207).

Calls alerting people to ecological crises have come from scientists, ecologists, and other writers from the 1960s onwards. Their voices, mocked and suppressed by corporations with financial interests in the exploitation of nature, and rejected by most of the news media, were also slow to be heard in most Departments of English.[22] Whilst other science-related disciplines had been 'greening' since the 1970s, ecologically-oriented contributions to literature had

mostly been from lonely voices contributing work under a miscellany of subject headings with critics and writers unaware of the work of others.[23] Glotfelty and her colleagues worked to bring writers and their work together into a consolidated field of study which was to become generally known as ecocriticism (xvi-xvii). Glotfelty interprets ecocritism as:

> ... the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies (cited in Glotfelty 1996, xviii).

Ecocriticism, then, provides an interdisciplinary prism through which one can examine ecological issues and values in literature, film, and other media. Contributions by people working in film and ecology, who may be unaware of other relevant work or the existence of people working on similar projects (like their literary colleagues in earlier times) are becoming part of the society of ecocritical contributers that Glotfelty and others worked so enthusiastically to unite in the early years of this decade.

To clarify what is meant by ecocriticism, Glotfelty presents a series of questions that could be asked when examining texts from an ecocritical perspective:

> How is nature presented in this sonnet? What role does the physical

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[22] Because of this Glotfelty (then Burgess) called for action within academia and the humanities. In an unpublished paper, 'Toward an Ecological Criticism', she wrote: For several years a question has been running like a river through the back of my mind, giving me no peace, often reaching flood proportions and submerging all other thoughts. Put simply, the question is this: how can we, as critics of literature, respond to the environmental crisis? ... It seems to me that the environmental problems facing us today are both so grave and so acute that they must take precedence over every other concern (1992, 1).

[23] This paper was inspiring for me as I was one of the lonely voices working in what was to become ecocriticism.

> setting play in the plot of this novel? Are the values expressed in this play consistent with ecological wisdom? How do our metaphors of the land influence the way we treat it? How can we characterise nature writing as a genre? In addition to race, class and gender, should *place* become a new critical category? Do men write about nature differently than women do? In what ways has literacy itself affected humankind's relationship to the natural world? How has the concept of wilderness changed over time? In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture? What view of nature informs US government reports, corporate advertising, and televised nature documentaries, and to what rhetorical effect? What bearing might the science of ecology have on literary studies? How is science itself open to literary analysis? What cross-fertilisation is possible in related disciplines such as history, philosophy, psychology, art history, ethics? (Glotfelty 1996, xix).

To these questions I add others. How does film portray twentieth century understandings of environmental crises? How do characters identify with spirituality, religion, and the Universe? What filmic visions are there for the destiny of humans and other inhabitants of the planet?

So many questions. This is the way with any field of study, but particularly one that is new. As Glotfelty states, academic departments, particularly the humanities, have long ignored environmental issues and ignored the questions that should have been asked. The desperate need to stop species loss and other ecological catastrophes means that ecocritics must continue their search for answers and for antidotes to apocalyptic scenarios.[24]

A major contribution of ecocriticism is that it can raise our sensual awareness of ecological issues and values through a range of media, images, sounds, and texts. By highlighting the *politics* of story-telling, ecocriticism can also remind us that stories can act

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[24] See Anne Primavesi (1991, 71-84).

as propaganda to *subvert*, as well as assert, ecological concerns. The role of ecofeminist criticism is to further examine the relations between women and nature, and to highlight and subvert examples of domination.

Ecofeminism

> Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. ... A radical critique ... feminist in its impulse, would have to work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves - Adrienne Rich (1990, preface).

Ecofeminism is an extension of ecocriticism and feminism; like most 'isms' it is diverse, though there are common links. Ecofeminists believe there is an important connection between the subjugation of women and the subjugation of the nonhuman world - or what is commonly called nature (Warren, 1997; Merchant, 1990, Plumwood, 1993; Primavesi, 1991). [25] The reversal of attitudes that link women and nature in a status of inferiority to men and culture is vital work in ecofeminism. Ecology and feminism provide the groundings necessary to turn ecofeminist criticism into a liveable praxis in which theory and action come together, rather than 'a merely useable one applicable only to literature, language, and thought' (Murphy 1998, 4). The world of action does not need to be separate from the world of theorised disciplines. However, there is a need to find common ground in the understanding of the term 'ecofeminism'. The words 'feminist' and 'ecology' are alien words to many of our community, even to some of our academic community. I have to acknowledge what experience has taught

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[25] Gretchen T. Legler believes 'one of the primary projects of ecofeminist critics is analysis of the cultural construction of nature, which also includes an analysis of language, desire, knowledge, power' (1997, 227). The film *The Piano* is particularly suitable for such an analysis. See Chapter Four.

me: that, in the community generally, understanding of these terms is shallow, making ecofeminism vulnerable to criticisms of exclusiveness.[26] This emphasis privileges feminism when ecological issues may be of major importance for women who are particularly concerned with the needs[27] of other species. These needs are not denied by feminists; it is important to remember that ecofeminism is built on the work of other forms of feminism (Plumwood 1992, 13).

Ecofeminists seek to elevate perceptions of both women and nonhuman nature, and to give precedence to cultural attributes associated with care and nurturing rather than domination. However, by associating themselves closely with nature, ecofeminists have been termed 'essentialist'. Carolyn Merchant counters the essentialist argument by saying: 'there are no unchanging "essential" characteristics of sex, gender, or nature. Individuals form concepts of nature and their own relationships to it that draw on the ideas and norms of the society into which they are born, socialized and educated' (1990, xvi). Ecofeminism represents women's preparedness to move towards a stage in their relationships with nature which Plumwood describes as:

> beyond that of reaction against their old exclusion from culture, to an active, deliberate and reflective positioning of themselves *with* nature against a destructive and dualising form of culture (Plumwood 1992, 13).

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[26] Primavesi, as an example, experienced problems with her use of the word 'ecofeminism', whilst preparing her book, *From Apocalypse to Genesis* (1991), for publication. One theologian said that she would lose some of her Christian readers in agreement with her feminist stance because of her ecological stance, and vice versa. Primavesi's associates agreed with James Lovelock when he correctly warned her that 'in science, double-barrelled words like biotechnology and microbiology are biased towards the second term' (1991, ix,15).

[27] Note my use of the word 'needs' rather than 'rights'. See 'The Need for Roots', reproduced as 'The Needs of the Soul' (Miles, 1986, 105-140).

Karen J. Warren believes that ecofeminism opposes all forms of domination and then makes visible how these are maintained (1997a, 4).[28] She envisions ecofeminism by using the metaphor of a quilt which has a number of features or 'pieces' within a defining border (Warren 1994, 16-189). Pieces in the metaphorical quilt which contribute to ecofeminist theory are indeed multifaceted, encompassing narratives, empirical data, and interdisciplinary and philosophical perspectives. In *Ecofeminism: Women Culture Nature* (Warren, ed., 1997a) many of the narratives in the anthology are personal, describing women's fields of knowledge and experience from the interplay of 'gendered living, environmental struggle and extensive studies of dialectical philosophies' (Warren ed., 1997a, 95), and the ways that both are frequently ignored. An example is Adrienne Elizabeth Christiansen's discussion of the then looming Persian Gulf War and Senator Nancy Pelosi's unheeded warning against environmental degradation that turned out to be 'uncannily accurate':

> The war cloud that would result from exploding oilfields and large-scale bombing of Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the Middle East would doom the environment for many years to come. ... Let us focus on these images: Fires raging for weeks, or perhaps months, sending tons of smoke and debris into the Earth's atmosphere. Oil equal to a dozen Exxon Valdez spills coursing through Gulf waters. Millions of dolphins, fish, sea-birds and other marine life washed onto Gulf shores. Smoke and debris blocking sunlight, causing temperatures to drop and altering crop seasons which would result in widespread famine. Toxic plumes ascending to the upper atmosphere and falling as acid rain. Chemical contamination of air, water, and vegetation (cited in Warren ed., 1997a, 244).

In the same anthology, Ruthanne Kurthe-Schai writes about ecofeminism and children; Candice Bradley writes about women's

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[28] In 'Celebration and Resistance' Karen M. Fox writes: All ecofeminists focus on the intimate connections between the lives of women and the ecological condition ... Warren provides a wonderful metaphor, the 'quilt of ecological feminism,'for theorizing and theory building and provides minimal and necessary conditions for choosing 'pieces' for inclusion within the quilt of ecofeminism (1997, 155).

work - particularly women of colour - as guardians of soil, fields and wildflowers; Robert Alan Sessions writes about women and work; Joseph R. Loer writes about the importance of ecofeminism and its insights in Africa from a chemical engineer's perspective; and Petra Kelly writes about women and power (cited in Warren ed., 1997a).

The image of a quilt rests in the mind as aesthetic, useful, and practical work that can be crafted with complementary and diverse pieces such as the essays in Warren's anthology (1997a). Quilting is a craft learnt from white women by native American women to tell their own stories (Troy-Smith 1996, 30). The stories of people who have died from AIDS have been brought together by stitchers, as a testimony of love, in an enormous and continually growing quilt. Important too is the notion of stitching and quilting as a subversive craft in which women resist their historical silencing by exploring language that is non-verbal (Troy-Smith 1996, 117-142).

Annette Solomon emphasises the power of the image rather than the word in her story-telling quilting work as a way to 'render practical ways of dealing with the social implications of what has become called the ecological crisis' (1999, 28). Solomon wore a patchwork piece at her masters graduation ceremony as a type of hood. She quilted a garment of healing with the *ouroborous* symbol on the back of her cloak. This act was to honour women whose work has been trivialised, as well as the 'witches' and other women who died or suffered because of their female knowledge:

> The snake biting its tail was an ancient symbol of regeneration, symbolising endings and new beginnings. The hood which accompanies the cloak and resembles the cowl of Christian priestly vestments,

> represents for me the headress of the witches, women whose knowledge was stolen and almost lost - a heritage of wisdoms and ways of knowing which is covered over by the application of dogmatic formulae in the name of 'epistemological correctness'. For these reasons wearing the hood at my graduation ceremony held a deep significance for me. The quilt and the hood had been created as a vestment of honour to the hundreds of thousands of women whose knowledge was trivialised and then forcibly taken, and a garment of healing for myself and other women who may see it (Solomon 1999, 30).

Telling old stories in new ways is a postmodern challenge, and one of many ways to subvert clichéd and detrimental conceptions of women and nature. Many conventional myths and metaphors are antifemale in the ways in which they refer to men as the heros, and quests as male quests. One of the many tasks of ecofeminism is to revisit and retell these stories so that the hero is *not* always imaged as male and the female is *not* linked with Eve as a *femme fatale,* and is *not* the divine mother, *not* the waiting woman, *or* the impossible virgin. The quest, as Frye writes, is an archetypal theme, yet the quest or journey can be female - not one in which the hero dominates nature, killing monsters and men in order to succeed (1973).[29]

Speaking for the other or letting the other speak

In the same way that my Masters thesis increased my awareness of the androcentric and anthropocentric structure of myths and stories which support male hierarchies (including the Bible), so it is with the structures perpetuated by film-makers in whose films a white male heroic hierarchy still exists. Nonhuman species are rarely represented, and even more rarely are they selected for lead roles. In Australian films, for example, animals, other than the occasional kangaroo or dingo, are rarely seen. The Australian

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[29] See 'The Archetypal Quest' (Jenkins 1993); Frye (1973, 115-117); and 'Oedipus Interruptus' Laurentis (1999, 83-96).

film, *Babe,* has a pig as lead character and supporting farm animal characters including chickens, ducks, and sheep, but Babe the pig - like Lassie and Black Beauty and Pilgrim, the horse in *The Horse Whisperer* - is domesticated and therefore subdued. Communication between man and horse in *The Horse Whisperer* results in the horse being dragged to the ground, so that it becomes an obedient horse. Babe is trained[30] to perform for a kindly farmer in a sanitised farm that could be any farm, anywhere. Possums, wallabies, pademelons, and echidnas that are still detectable in the Australian bush, even around some farms, are nowhere to be seen. There is a sense of 'anywhere' and 'nowhere' Disneyfication[31] in the *misè en scene.* Characteristics of farmhouse, place, and endemic species that are distinctly Australian have been removed for a neutral and romanticised version of farm and country life, for success in an American or international market.

It is significant that two successful films, one devoted to nonhuman species (*Microcosmos),* and one inclusive of human and nonhuman species and their habitats (*Baraka*), follow a documentary style, but without a narrator, allowing other voices and sounds space in the narrative. Murphy writes that '[n]umerous artists and authors have attempted to render nature as a speaking subject, not in the romantic mode of rendering nature as an object for the self-constitution of the poet as speaking subject, but as a character within texts with its own existence'. Murphy instances such writers as Dorothy Wordsworth, Robinson Jeffers, Mary Oliver, John

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[30] 60 pigs were trained, 48 appeared on the screen as Babe (Schickel, WWW 2000). Schickel suggests that the viewer 'take goodness where you find it - and resolutely deny what snooty qualities anthropomorphising raises in you.' He has a point.

[31] See Murphy (1999).

Haines, Ursula Le Guin, Gary Snyder, and Linda Hogan, and adds that 'these attempts are most successful when they include human characters as well, enabling the differential comparison of self and other' (1995, 12). Yet Carson's story of Anguila the eel, which is without human characters, does not exclude comparison of self and other. One subconsciously compares eel and human, with respect for the eel in its amazing two hundred mile journey from Bittern Pond to the sea (Carson 1952, 163-177). Murphy writes that 'the point is not to speak for nature, but to render the signification presented to us by other elements of nature into a verbal depiction by means of speaking subjects, whether this is through characterization in the arts or through discursive prose' (1995, 13). But then Carson, in her telling of Anguila's story, opens up an imaginary discourse of interconnectedness with the sounds and movements of the creatures of Bittern Pond. This respects other species more than, say, the speaking subjects in Disney films and the animals in *Babe*. A view of life and a communicating Universe is described by Lyall Watson in *Supernature*:

> ... there is a continuous communication not only between living things and their environment, but among all those things living in that environment. An intricate web of interaction connects all life into one vast, self-maintaining system. Each part is related to every other part and we are all part of the whole, part of Supernature (1973, 28).

As Christopher Manes writes in his essay 'Nature and Silence': 'viable environmental ethics must confront "the silence of nature" - the fact that in our culture only humans have status as speaking subjects' (1996, 26, fn). Compensations for previous absences and silences of both women and nature in historical, filmic, and literary texts, are now being made. As Manes states:

> For half a millennium, 'Man' has been the centre of conversation in the West. This fictional character has occluded the natural world, leaving it voiceless and subjectless ... a viable environmental ethics must challenge the humanistic backdrop that makes 'Man' possible, restoring us to the humbler status of *Homo sapiens*: one species among millions of other beautiful, terrible, fascinating - and signifying - forms (1996, 26 n).

One of the roles of ecofeminism is to seek out structures of domination, and absences or loss brought about by this domination, and to listen to the stories, languages, voices and presences that previously have been ignored, both human and nonhuman: of rivers, animals, trees, goddesses and mothers. Since the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Sanders trans. 1972),[32] and the Aboriginal stories that long preceded it, people have used stories as a method of survival, to develop their relationships with their own and other species; and to understand the world and their place in it. Gary Snyder reminds us that in a completely preliterate society the oral tradition is not memorised but *remembered*:

> Thus, every telling is fresh and new, as the teller's mind's eye re-views the imagery of origins or journeys or loves or hunts. Themes and formulas are repeated as part of an ever-changing tapestry composed of both the familiar and the novel. Direct experience, generation by generation, feeds back into the tale told. Part of that experience is the group context itself, a circle of listeners who murmur the burden back or voice approval, or snore. Meaning flashes from mind to mind, and young eyes sparkle (1995, 94).

In *Called to Healing* Jean Troy-Smith writes that story-telling extends beyond word-telling to include all articulations of experiences that narrate, even non-verbal narration. She includes the narratives of music, mime, sculpture, painting, gardens,

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[32] Graves writes that the Zodiac is believed to have evolved in Babylonia from the life-story of the hero Gilgamesh; and that Gilgamesh is thought to have been a Hykos (Kassite) invader of Babylonia in the eighteenth century B.C. to whom the story of an earlier hero was transferred, a Tammuz of the familiar sort already connected to the Zodiac (1984, 379). See also Swimme and Berry for a discussion of the Neolithic perception of the universe and their section on *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (1998, 183-205).

needlework, and the various sub-categories of these larger experiences (1996, 26). In 'Story-telling and Truthtelling', Troy-Smith conveys the importance of stories: those told by children describing an experience; creation stories; and the stories that answer us when we ask, what went wrong as Carson's did when the eagles were dying, their eggs cracking before the embryos could form to live life beyond the shell (Troy-Smith 1996, 17).

Carson told the story of species' loss and chemical interference in *Silent Spring*, first published in 1962. Her book appeared in serial form in *The New Yorker* and subsequently became a best-seller (cited in Colburn, Dumanoski and Myer, 1997, 51). It gave 'a dramatic, prophetic and factual account of massive agrichemical poisoning from the chemical industry's sales ($300 million a year in 1962) of DDT, lindane, heptachlor and other dangerous toxins' (cited in Stauber and Rampton 1995, 123-125).

Creation stories and Earth stories

White writes that the roots of environmental crisis lie in the 'Genesis story in which God planned Creation explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes':

> While many of the world's mythologies provide stories of creation, Greco-Roman mythology was singularly incoherent in this respect. Like Aristotle, the intellectuals of the ancient West denied that the visible world had had a beginning. Indeed the idea of a beginning was impossible in the framework of their cyclical notion of time. In sharp contrast, Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as nonrepetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds and fishes. Finally God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely.[33] Man named all the animals, thus establishing dominance over them. God planned all this explicitly for

> man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image. Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen (cited in Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, 9).[34]

There has been considerable debate in response to White's paper which has resulted in a widening of focus to include other sections of the Bible which recommend the stewardship of planet Earth.[35] But, as Murphy writes, 'we should be wary of self-proclaimed "stewards" precisely because that term implies another "stewarded"' (1995, 65). As critics have also noted, environmental degradation occurred well before biblical times (Sax 1998, 211-112). Ralph H. Lutts defends White's position, saying that he did not attack monotheism, nor did he make a blanket statement against either Judaism or Christianity. Efforts to undermine White's argument by pointing to environmentally responsible elements in Judaism and Christianity do not, Lutts believes, demolish White's case, because he never argued that such elements did not exist. Indeed, Lutts argues, White acknowledged that they did (Lutts 1996, 1). In 'Continuing the Conversation', a response to his critics, White wrote:

> In every complex religious tradition there are recessive genes which in new circumstances may become dominant genes. In my 1967 discussion I referred to St. Francis's abortive challenge to the anthropocentric concept of God's world. Scattered through the Bible, but especially in the Old Testament, there are passages that can be read as sustaining the old notion of a spiritual democracy of all creatures. The point is that historically they seem seldom or never to have been interpreted. This should not inhibit anyone from taking a fresh look at them (cited in

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[33]There are two versions of the creation of Eve. In the second the Lord God takes a rib from Adam and forms the woman ('Genesis" 2:21-22). This is further discussed in the *Blade Runner* chapter.

[34] The story of the Garden of Eden, according to Campbell, was told on Sumerian seals from as early as 3500 B.C. The seals show the serpent, the tree and the goddess. It is, as he says, 'an old, old story' (1988, 47).

[35] The debate regarding White's paper is ongoing. See Father Robert Murray's overview (2000, 25-28).

Barbour 1973, 61).

The 'Genesis' myth, however, continues to be interpreted to reinforce anthropocentric ideas of a God-created hierarchy of species, and 'original sin'; and to support a yearning for pre-Fall nature - even though Pope John Paul II has accepted that humans are part of nature by accepting evolutionary theory. The theory, in the Pope's opinion, does not preclude the existence of God (cited in Gould 1999, 75). John Paul II states that he has witnessed an accumulation of data that recognises the theory of evolution, and that it can no longer be doubted by people of goodwill and keen intellect:

> ... new knowledge has led to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis. It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of the work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favour of the theory (cited in Gould 1999, 81-2).

But the superior position of men in society is still regularly reinforced by literal rather than metaphoric references to the Bible, espécially to 'Genesis' and the creation of man next to God, with woman created as an afterthought (Spong 1992, 1-14). These references are usually made at times when women are striving to improve their position, such as when seeking ordination, or improved conditions within the Church.

The perpetuation of the 'Genesis' myth frequently places women in the caste of Eve, portraying women as *femme fatales*, and in the scapegoat role of the not-the-Virgin other (Jenkins 1993, 60-62; Daly 1985, 62). The myth is an ongoing subject of church services, literature,

art and advertising, but both versions of creation (Eve created as helpmate after Adam, and Eve formed from Adam's rib) subjugate women, the serpent, and the rest of nature. The degraded view of women as sexual objects, and the denial, or degradation, of sexual relationships, has a long history which Joseph Campbell believes starts with Eve: 'The idea in the biblical tradition of the Fall is that nature as we know it is corrupt, sex in itself is corrupt, and the female as the epitome of sex is a corrupter' (Campbell 1988, 47). This myth is a refusal to affirm life, and a myth which corrupts the whole world for us. Campbell says:

> You get a totally different civilisation and a totally different way of living according to whether your myth represents nature as fallen or whether nature is in itself a manifestation of divinity, and the spirit is the revelation of the divinity that is inherent in nature (1988, 99).

The ethicist scholar, Peter Singer, believes that '[t]he more enlightened Christian readers have themselves now recognized that their Church's preoccupation with sex has been a mistake'. He states that Dr. George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury 'has admitted that the church has been guilty of being caught up with the idea that sexual sins were more significant than other sins and has said that instead we should think more in terms of global problems such as world poverty'. Singer goes on to say that 'once it is generally understood that ethics has no necessary connection with the sexually-obsessed morality of conservative Christianity, a humane and positive ethic could be the basis for a renewal of our social, political and ecological life (Singer, 1994, 16-17).

Annette Kolodny's following words contain the 'life-affirming' essence of ecological story-telling. She believes that we need to

'place our biologically *and* psychologically based 'yearnings for paradise' at the disposal of potentially healthier (that is survival oriented) and alternative symbolizing or image systems' (1975, 159), those of an interrelated, non-hierarchical community of beings in which death and decay are accepted as part of life and women and the serpent are not blamed for the ills of a non-edenic society. In 'Paradise Lost and the Fall into Patriarchy' Rosemary Radford Ruether examines a new 'fall story' which emerged from the ecofeminist movement: the story of the fall into patriarchy: a story which has faith in the idea of a matriarchal or matrilineal time linked to a peaceful, art loving society, which supports faith that such a time can be achieved again. It is a faith that is important in mythological thought, as Radford Ruether states (1992, 154-155).[36]

Biblical stories, like archeological and other stories, can be variously interpreted to suit the ideologies of the reader, audience, or viewer. These interpretations vary from time to time and place to place except when there is a deliberate intent to hold the story fixed in time in order to support official dogma. Access to the Dead Sea Scrolls and The Nag Hammadi library, discovered in a wave of expeditions, during the 1940s, was delayed and restricted because the writings partly contradicted accepted Old and New Testaments. As is suggested in *Jesus of Montreal*, archeological finds, like the scrolls, reveal information that could detract from the canonical texts of Christianity (Hoeller 1989, 19).

Gnosticism rivalled Christianity during the first three centuries of the Christian era. In the *Gnostic Gospels* (1990) Elaine Pagels writes

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[36] Some aspects of these Old European cultures may indeed have been more egalitarian and female identifying. The debate continues.

about fifty-two papyrus texts said to contain the secret writings of Jesus that were buried in an earthenware jar in the Egyptian desert. These Coptic translations from the original Greek offered a powerful alternative to the Orthodox Christian tradition.[37] They were highly imaginative and embodied poems, quasi-philosophical descriptions of the Universe, myths, and magical instructions for mystic practice. According to Pagels:

> The sources of secret gospels, revelations, mystical teachings are not included in the select list that constitutes the new Testament collection. Every one of the secret texts which gnostics revered was omitted from the canonical collection, and branded as heretical by those who call themselves orthodox Christians. By the time the process of sorting out the various writings ended - probably as late as the year 200 - virtually all the feminine imagery for God had disappeared from the orthodox Christian tradition (1990, 78).

Women, gradually excluded from the canon of biblical texts, were represented in gnostic writings. Sophia is described as the mother of life: 'From Sophia, the celestial mother of all living things, was born [God], the one who became the fashioner and ruler of the system of creation' (Hoeller, 1989, 141). Eve, or Zoe (meaning life), is also described as the mother of all the living (Primavesi, 1991, 274). She is the wise feminine spirit that entered Adam to assist him with wisdom and spiritual strength. Because of the serpent's lowness in the biblical 'Genesis' stories of God's Creation and its role as tempter of Eve in the Garden of Eden, the serpent, once a revered creature of Western and Near Eastern civilisation, has been historically maltreated, as have other animals low in the hierarchy of God's Creation. In the Gnostic writings, the serpent is not the deceiver who brings about a Fall, but is the bringer of

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[37] Coptic language is Afro-Asiatic, written in the Greek alphabet but descended from ancient Egyptian. It was extinct as a spoken language by about 1600 A.D. but survives in the Coptic Church.

wisdom or *gnosis*. In one of its forms it metaphorically appears as a tail-swallowing, dragon-serpent monster. This monster 'represents ... the cyclicity of self-perpetuating natural life within time' (Hoeller, 1989 164).

Story and Metaphor

Communities endeavouring to understand relationships do so by metaphor and analogy, as well as by story-telling, drama, song, and poetry. From the earliest days of civilisation, and even before the written word, metaphors have contributed to understanding, sometimes creating unexpected and enlightening associations and connections. As Fry notes, when we use metaphor we are not asserting that 'A' is 'B', we are really saying that 'A' is in some respects similar to 'B' (1973, 123). In *Always Coming Home*, Ursula le Guin, through one of her characters, describes the use of imagination and metaphor as a spiritual way of living without dogma or ideologies dependent on faith in gods or goddesses:

> The whole system is profoundly metaphorical. To limit it to any other mode would be, in the judgement of the people of the Valley, superstition. It is for this reason that I do not refer to the system of the Nine Houses as religion ... despite the obvious and continuous relation of Valley living and thinking with the sacred. They had no god; they had no gods; they had no faith. What they appear to have is a working metaphor (1986, 51-52).

Without an understanding of metaphor it is not possible to understand the role that stories perform, including most of the world's creation stories. Pablo Neruda, a character in the film *Il Postino* explains in a simple yet eloquent manner the role of metaphor when he meets an illiterate postman. The postman is in love with a young woman of his village who works in her parent's

cafe, but he is unable to articulate his feelings to her. When delivering mail to the exiled poet, Neruda, he asks him how he too can become a poet so that he can express his love. Neruda replies that the postman must learn about metaphor. 'Metaphor', the postman says, 'what is metaphor?' 'If I tell you that the sky is crying what do you think this means?', the poet says. 'That it is raining', the postman replies. He begins to make associations with the moods and beauty of the wind and the trees, waves and the sea, stars and the sky, of his island home and his beloved Beatrice, and to express his feelings for both. He learns to listen, to see, and to make connections between himself and nature, as well as Beatrice. The postman perceives greater expressions of love from the poet (who embraces and dances with his wife unaware of the postman's presence) than the village priest who speaks more of God's wrath rather than the compassion of Jesus. The postman also learns from Neruda that poetry can be political, and that with words and poetry he can work for democracy, for freedom from oppression, and for basic ecological rights, such as clean water for his village.

Love is an overworked word, but love *is* an experience of caring. The caring relationship of Neruda and his wife extended beyond themselves to the postman, and to their political activity. Love provoked the postman's curiosity and changed his world-view. In an article in the journal *Resurgence*, 'Nature is my God', Mikael Gorbachev is asked by the writer of the article, Fred Maser, 'What does the word 'love' mean to you?'. Gorbachev replies:

> Love is a mystery of nature. I think it is good that it will remain a mystery. Of course, there has been a lot of comment on love. First of all love for me is what unites man and woman. Love also unites

> humans and nature. I believe that we are dealing here with a mystery that is too big for us. Once you try to define it, it is the end of love. It dies once you think you know its secret (cited in Maser 1991, 18).

The film *Il Postino* is an example of the metaphoric union of humans and nonhuman nature. In its political stance the film also challenges capitalism by parodying politicians and exposing political tricks - such as the promise of water for the village - by which politicians seek to win favour and votes from the villagers.

Metaphors and the Bible

> Occasionally in the Bible ... God is thought of on (sic) the analogy of a mother, and as the church does not believe that God is literally a father, and understands 'Father' to be a metaphor, the metaphor 'Father' is rendered in this version by a new metaphor, 'Father-Mother,' so the metaphor allows the mind to oscillate between the picture of God as 'Father' and the picture of God as 'Mother', the mind attributing both fatherly and motherly attributes to God (Gold *et al.*, 1995, xxii).

The inclusive version of the New Testament (1995),[38] recognises cultural and scientific change by attempting to make biblical metaphors less androcentric and less prejudiced. The most challenging textual change made is the move from the metaphor of 'God the Father' to the partnership metaphor of 'God the Father-Mother'. This translation has huge implications and, to

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[40] Biblical references in the thesis are to 'The "Inclusive Version" of the New Testament' (1995),[38] and the Authorised Version of the Bible, also known as the New King James Version (1982). The New Testament (1995) undertakes to translate the biblical text according to late twentieth century linguistic and social requirements and to correct the androcentric and anti-Semitic overtones of the New Testament. The editors refer to the androgynous nature of God in early writings. They present translations which address biblical discriminations in a rendition of the whole Testament and the Psalms. The result, they believe, is inclusive with regard to gender, race, religion, or physical condition, whilst not violating the meaning of the gospel. The 'Inclusive Version' undertakes to: replace or rephrase all gender-specific language not referring to particular historical individuals, all perjorative references to race, color, or religion, and all identifications of persons by their physical disability alone, by means of paraphrase, alternative renderings, and other acceptable means of conforming the language of the work to an inclusive idea (Gold *et al* 1995, viii, ix).

use Primavesi's term,'what ifs' (1991, 143). A partnership mythology, rather than a patriarchal mythology, can bring about changes not only to our stories but to our culture. Metaphors used to describe and separate the feminine and the masculine Universe are able to change, preventing the hierarchies that still exist in which man is superior and all else is 'other'. Women may then re-enter the biblical stories from which they have previously been excluded, or have been the nameless 'She'.[39] Biblical stories take on new meanings that may be challenging to church and educational authorities. A New York syndicated article states that 'the editors admit that a legion of traditionalists are waiting to "cast the first stone' and begin one of the biggest biblical debates in years' (*Mercury* 1995, 13). Such a debate, however, may be conducted amongst theologians and scholars but is still to reach the secular public. The debate about language and imagery for God that ecofeminists and feminists have insisted upon is, however, slowly being brought out into the open, so that those images of God which sanction domination go.

With these recent interpretations, New Testament stories take on new meanings that may be challenging to church and educational authorities when, for example, Jesus, 'the son' becomes 'the child'; when children should not 'obey' their parents but 'heed' them; when wives are no longer 'subject' to their husbands but 'committed' to them. In spite of the efforts of the editors of the New Testament (1995) to produce an inclusive and less sexist text, there is no recognition in their 'Introduction' of a need to reassess relationships between human and nonhuman species in biblical

[39] Sarah's name, for example, is added to Abraham's in the listing of Israel's progenitors in the New Testament story (Gold *et al* 1995, xv).

studies. The editors' role is to *interpret,* not to change texts in other ways. They are, therefore, commited to remain loyal to many androcentric, anthropocentric, and hierarchical statements.

Biblical stories do not on the whole provide a context which allows women to function in a meaningful manner. And, as Troy-Smith reminds us, theologies created to justify a conquering point of view [God and man dominating everything else] are *not* theologies created from spontaneous revelations of truth. Therefore, story-telling - acts of remembering and recalling - may be based on false constructs (Troy-Smith, 1995, 18).

Because of the biblical statement that witches must be killed (Exodus 22:18), the Church supported the centuries-long persecution of witches, most of them women. Primavesi traces the background of biblical battle themes that became standard terminology for much of Christian spirituality and which sanctified violence in a Christian battle against a pagan world - with ugly manifestations of Christianity's hierarchical character and its perceptions of power (1991, 213-214). She writes that during the eighteenth century when Quaker women 'dared to raise their voices to interpret scripture' they were treated violently, suffering whippings, hangings and burnings (1991, 191). These theocratical oppressions contribute to material for Nicholas Hytner's *The Crucible,* the film discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Two

The Crucible,[40] the Hammer of Witches,[41] and the Giving Up of Conscience

What evil spirit have you familiarity with?
None.
Have you made contact with the devil?
No.
Why do you hurt these children?
I do not hurt them. I scorn it.
Who do you imploy then to do it?
I imploy nobody.
What creature do you imploy then?
No creature. I am falsely accused.[42]

The Crucible (1996),[43] directed by Nicholas Hytner, and closely adapted by Arthur Miller from his 1953 play for the film of the same name, is set in the still partly wild environment of Hog Island, Massachusetts - near to where the Salem Witch Trials occurred during 1692.[44] The trials were marked by unfairness, prejudice, and cruelty; they resulted in more than a hundred people being imprisoned. Four died in prison, nineteen were executed, and one man was pressed to death for refusing a trial. Scores of

[40] A severe trial or test (by theocracy).

[41] Definitions of 'hammer' include 'to question in a relentless manner'; 'to criticize severely' 'to inflict defeat on', and 'to beat, punish, or chastise' (Collins 1986, 693). The words 'witch' and 'wicked' are derived from the ancient word for willow, which also yields 'wicker'. Willow is associated with the Moon-goddess (Graves 1948, 173).

[42] Dialogue based on the examination of Sarah Good by Judges Hathorne and Corwin, from the Salem Witchcraft Papers, Book II, 35 (Salem Office of Tourism and Cultural Affairs 1997).

[43] A French film version of *The Crucible* (1953), *Les Sourcieres de Salem*, directed by Raymond Rouleau, was filmed in 1957 (Frieden and Elliott WWW).

[44] Because Miller's play and film-script, *The Crucible*, are relatively unchanged by the director, references to Hytner are less than in other of the five films in which the director takes on the role of auteur.

people received less severe punishments (Smith 1962, 455; Frieden and Elliott WWW 2000).

From Miller's filmscript Hytner creates a gothic gloom and a sense of the times: the infectious hysteria, the social conflicts, and 'the fear that develops as pubescent girls point their fingers at those around them in a "crying out"' (Frieden and Elliott WWW 2000).[45] Although Hytner's direction - the lighting, the camera work, the setting, and the Salem characters - undoubtedly contributes to the production, it is the power of Miller's *story* that provides rich (and horrific) material for ecocritical and ecofeminist analyses. Miller interweaves the fiction of the lust of a young girl for a married man with the history of the persecutions during the last of the witchcraft crazes that occurred in Salem. Both men and women were persecuted by the Church and secular authorities, but women more so. They were imagined in harmful and bizarre relationships with nature, and were believed to be the 'henchmen' of the Devil. According to Harriet Ritvo, animals were also accorded 'a burden of guilt for witchcraft, homicide, sodomy and other crimes ...' (Ritvo 1987, 2).

Miller covers much of what he believed was the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history. He writes that little is known of the historical persons of the Salem witch trials, and that his characters are largely creations of his own, conforming with the known behaviour of their real-life referents where possible (1957, 39-47). Miller states that there is no one who did not play a similar role, and in some cases exactly the

[45] See also Boyer and Nissenbaum 1974, passim.

same role, in history (1957, 224). At times, however, Miller intentionally deviates from history. For example, he raises Abigail William's age from eleven years to that of a teenager, and John Proctor is considerably younger than the sixty-year old man who was hanged.[46] Several characters are condensed into fewer representative characters (Miller 1957, 224).

Miller correctly writes that biblical examples and religious and moralistic debate did nothing to temper the cruelty of the Trials. According to him *The Crucible*:

> ... threw a certain light upon the difference between the modern playwriting problem of meaning and that of the age preceding the secularization of society. It is impossible to study the trial record without feeling the immanence of a veritable pantheon of life values in whose name both prosecution and defence could speak. The testimony is thick with reference to Biblical examples, and even as religious belief did nothing to temper cruelty - and in fact might be shown to have made the cruel crueler - it often served to raise this swirling and ludicrous mysticism to a level of high moral debate; and it did this despite the fact that most of the participants were unlettered, simple folk (Miller 1968, 46).

The witchhunts coincided with the period of the godly state, when Christianity became the official ideology of the new-born nation state. It was the fathers of the Christian Church, including the father of holy fathers, the Pope, who combined with Enlightenment rationalists to persecute people accused of witchcraft. One of the main concerns of the witchcraft theorists was to explain the basis for the behaviour of those men and women traditionally called sorcerers, witches, cunning folk, and diviners. Their power could not be reconciled with the normal workings of nature, nor did it depend on rituals which lay within the control of the church. Any

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[46] The age changes presumably are made to make the characters' sexual relationship more acceptable to viewers.

wonders which they could perform, argued the theorists, such as harm done to fellow villagers, animals or crops, or claims of night flying or shape-shifting, were to be attributed either to an imagination influenced by the Devil or to the direct operation of a diabolical power. The evil power certainly did not rest with the women or men themselves; it was a diabolical power, they were puppets, decoys and conduits for the world behind the world (Zika 1991, 155). Ecclesiastical and secular authority for the persecution of witches was provided by the Bible: 'For rebellion is the sin of witchcraft'[47]; the Papal Bull of Innocent VIII: *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, of December 9, 1484;[48] and *Malleus Maleficarum* ('The Hammer of Witches'), written two years after the Bull (Kramer and Sprenger 1486).

In the 'Bull' the Pope delegates the two Dominican monks, Heinrich Kramer, Professor of Sacred Theology, of the Order of Preachers, and James Sprenger, Professor of Sacred Theology and Prior of the Dominican Convent at Cologne, to continue their work as inquisitors, calling in the 'help of the secular arm' if help is needed with penalties (cited in Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 29-32). The Pope laments the power and prevalence of the witch organisation and the lapsing from faith by those persons:

> who have abandoned themselves to devils, incubi and succubi, and by their incantations; spells conjurations, and other accursed charms and crafts, enormities and horrid offences, have slain infants yet in their mother's womb, as also the offspring of cattle, have blasted the produce of the earth, the grapes of the vine, the fruit of the trees, nay, men and women, beasts of burthen, herd-beasts, as well as animals of other kinds, vineyards, orchards, meadows, pastureland, corn, wheat, and all other cereals; these wretches further-more afflict and torment men

[47] 1 Samuel 15:23.

[48] Cited in Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 29.

> and women, beasts of burthen, herd, beasts, as well as animals of other kinds, with terrible and piteous pains and sore diseases, both internal and external; they hinder men from performing the sexual act and women from conceiving ... (cited in Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 29).

Malleus Maleficarum, written by Kramer and Sprenger, is believed to be the most important and damaging medieval work on the subject of witches (Easlea 1980, 6-11; Merchant 1990, 138). It was the official Treatise of the Church and was authorised as 'The official document of Approbation' by the 'Doctors of the most honourable University of Cologne' and other high ranking officials (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 568). It was reprinted several times and within twenty years was published in most European languages (Wheatley 1971, 11-13). Easlea describes this '*magnum opus*' as a 'searing indictment of what the priests believed to be female evil and Satan's conspiracy against the Christian faithful' (Easlea 1980, 6).[49] The detailed arguments contained within the Treatise are presented in such a way that whichever way the victims pleaded they would suffer horrific cruelty. Once brought to trial there was little that those accused of witchcraft could do to defend themselves. Confessions would be extorted with the promise that lives of the accused would be saved when in fact there was no intention to spare them (Wheatley 1971, 13).

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[49] *Maleficarum* was reprinted fourteen times before 1521 and another fifteen times after 1576. That women were mostly subjects of accusation is implicit when the feminine form Malef*icar*um is used in the title, rather than Malefic*or*um (Merchant 1990, 138).

In his 'Introduction' to the treatise Dennis Wheatley describes the latter centuries of Roman occupation in Britain when the earliest converts to Christianity were made. Christianity, according to Wheatley, was not easily accepted by the masses who for many centuries remained Pagan. When the moon was full they celebrated Sabbats that had been held from time immemorial with feasting, dancing, and other carnal joys that were part of their fertility rites. 'The Church eventually succeeded in transforming the benign jovial Horned God into Satan. Not in his original form as the beautiful, rebellious archangel Lucifer ... but as an insatiable lover of licentious women and the inspirer of evil, whom they named "The Devil"' (Wheatley, 1971, 11).

Although *Malleus Maleficarum* is not mentioned by name in Miller's drama it would undoubtedly have been one of the many reference books carried to Salem by the Reverend John Hale to give him the authority to seek out witches. Hale is called to investigate the strange phenomena experienced by the town's young women, and to ensure that biblical instruction is followed:

> There shalt not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch (Deuteronomy 18:10).[50]

For three centuries after its publication, *Malleus Maleficarum* became the indispensable handbook and ultimate authority for the Inquisition. This Treatise, 'weighted with authority' (Miller, 1957, 251), published as righteous, religious dogma, more deluded, shocking, evil and misogynistic than any other I have read, was justification for the cruel practises excercised in witchhunts. Most present-day readers would find it ludicrous, but the power of its words had an extraordinary influence on witch investigators when seeking signs of the Devil. When the Reverend Samuel Parris asks 'what book is that', Hale answers:

> Here is all the invisible world; in these books the Devil stands stripped of all his brute disguises. Here are all your familiar spirits: your incubi and your succubi, your witches that go by land, by air, and by sea. Have no fear now - we shall find him out if he has come among us, and I mean to crush him utterly if he has shown his face! (Miller 1996a, 27).

On another level *The Crucible* acts as allegory.[51] Peter Brunette describes the Salem trials as a 'literal witch hunt' and a

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[50] When John Proctor hesitates during a recitation of the Ten Commandments (because of his adultery), he condemns himself. John Hale, an investigator of witchcraft, states: 'Theology, sir, is a fortress; no crack in the fortress may be considered small ... ' (Miller 1996, 55).

'commentary on that other witch hunt of the early 50's, the hearings of the House Unamerican Activities Committee, which sought to root out all "subversives" from the entertainment industry' (Brunette WWW 2000) among others. The Committee, set up by Senator Joseph McCarthy, caused politically instigated fear, and turned neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend. The persecutions affected Hollywood, with the studios submitting artists' names to the Committee for 'clearing' before employing them. This, Miller reported in *The New Yorker*, 'unleashed a veritable holy terror among actors, directors and others, from Party members to those who had the merest brush with a front organisation' (1996b, 160). Miller states that he was partly motivated to write *The Crucible* as an act of desperation:

> ... because of the blow struck on the mind by the rise of European Fascism and the brutal anti-Semitism it had brought to power. But by 1950, when I began to think about writing about the hunt for Reds in America, I was motivated in some great part by the paralysis that had set in among many liberals who, despite their discomfort with the inquisitors' violations of civil rights, were fearful, and with good reason, of being identified as covert Communists if they should protest too strongly.
>
> In any play, however trivial, there has to be a point of moral reference against which to gauge the action of our lives. In our lives in the late nineteen-forties and early nineteen-fifties, no such point existed any more. The left could not look straight at the Soviet Union's abrogation of human rights. The anti-Communist liberals could not acknowledge the violation of those rights by congressional committees ... Nobody but a fanatic, it seemed, could really say all that he believed (Miller 1996b, 160).

The Story of *The Crucible*

[51] The witchcraft in the Puritan era is allegory for anticommunism in the modern era (Spann 1996). Allegory is 'a poem, play, picture, etc. in which the apparent meaning of the characters and events is used to symbolise a deeper and more spiritual meaning' (Collins 1986, 39). Martin and Ostwalt discuss allegory in relation to David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet* with its 'perpetual deferral of meaning and a nostalgia for mythical origins ... allegorical art enacts the desire for history even as it points to a gap between the present and an unretrievable past. History in any conventional sense is no longer possible but, rather, is recognized as the unbridgable gap between the sign and the referent. For some critics the postmodern shift is a shift in elocutionary mode from history to discourse' (1995, 138).

To fabricate a story of passion, Miller creates a triangular relationship between an orphaned girl, Abigail, and John and Elizabeth Proctor. Abigail conjures visions of the Devil and hell as she allows her desire for Proctor to entrap him, his wife - her former mistress - and other villagers, in her childish, but deadly, fantasies. Proctor is, by contrast, a 'good man' but one who suffers in a 'cold house'. He regrets his previous desire for Abigail, and regrets even more that she is not easily put aside.

In his notes on the screenplay Arthur Miller writes of the extra dimensions that could be achieved in the film than were possible in the stage-play:

> There was a new excitement in being able actually to show the girls out in the forest with Tituba in the wee hours - playing - as I had always imagined - with the powers of the underworld to bring to life their secret heart's desires. But it was gay, harmless juvenalia, I was sure, until one of them intimated her wish that her former mistress, wife of her beloved John Proctor, might simply die. There was the possibility of showing the wild beauty of the newly cultivated land bordered by the wild sea, and the utter disorder and chaos of the town meetings where the people were busy condemning to death for loving the Evil One. Now one could see the hysteria as it grew rather than for the most part reporting it only (Miller 1996a, vii).

In the early scene that Miller describes, Abigail and the girls of the village leave their beds in the night. They don their dark hooded cloaks as they depart to dance in the forest and cast spells with Reverend Parris's West Indian maid, Tituba. They are curious young girls meeting to discuss their future love and what the nature of their marriage might be: 'what trade their sweethearts should be of' (Boyer and Nissenbaum 1974, 1). Elizabeth (Betty) Parris is caught in the forest by her father, Abigail's uncle. His house becomes a

suspected place of the devil, for as Betty lies motionless in her bed rumours of witchcraft are spreading amongst the Salem community. When Betty eventually wakens, we see her attempting to fly from the upstairs window of Parris's house.

Parris and most of his parish are depicted as God-fearing men and women but many, including Parris, fear the Devil more. His position in the community, already under pressure, is threatened by these events, as is his hold on his possesssions, his home and the land he occupies. The hysteria surrounding the story of the girls' night exploits builds and those accused of witchcraft name others when under torture. True to history, they *create* witches; Elizabeth Proctor, for example, becomes one of the accused. Elizabeth is known to be a most truthful woman, but in the tension-filled court scene she is asked during cross-examination if her husband has been unfaithful to her. Elizabeth denies it. She tells a lie to save her husband, not knowing that he has already confessed adultery with Abigail. By this act she exonerates Abigail and condemns Proctor.

Because of the accusations made by Abigail and other hysterical young girls Proctor is hung. Prior to his death he and others on the scaffold say the Lord's Prayer. Witches are considered incapable of reciting the Lord's Prayer so this act contributes to a change amongst the villagers. Previously they applauded the hangings, believing themselves rid of corrupting influences. Doubt - a factor that contributed to the ending of the witchcraft trials - enters the minds of the villagers. The thought that those accused must have done something wrong becomes difficult to maintain when

respected people of their society become victims. With the death of Proctor and other respected members of the community they start turning away. Abigail's harmful influence on the other girls in the village ends when she flees the village after Proctor's death with funds stolen from her uncle.

The exercising of conscience

Miller said that he 'wished for a way to write a play that would be sharp, that would lift out of the morass of subjectivism the squirming, single, defined process which would show that the sin of public terror is that it divests a man of conscience - of himself' (Miller, 1957, 41). What Miller was most concerned, and disappointed, about, was that reviews and criticisms of his play failed to recognise what he called the 'giving up of conscience'. In the 'Introduction' to the Penguin edition of *The Crucible*, Miller writes:

> I believe that on the night of its opening, a time when the gale from the Right was blowing at its fullest fury, it inspired a part of its audience with an unsettling fear and partisanship which deflected the sight of the real and inner theme, which, again, was the handing over of a conscience to another, be it woman, the state, or a terror, and the realisation that with conscience goes the person, the soul immortal, and the 'name'. That there was not one mention of this process in any review, favourable or not, was the measure of my sense of defeat... (Miller 1968, 47).

The problem that occurs when people give up their consciences to others is that right is allowed to sit on the side of the accusers. The patriarchal authority of the Church, the Law, and the State was behind the persecutions and executions. This is the most fearful thing, as it is at any time when authorities transmute normally conceived wrong behaviour into right behaviour. In a

syndicated article, 'Into The Crucible Again', Arthur Miller, connected the victims of the Salem Witch Trials with President Bill Clinton:

> A number of commentators have seen a resemblance between the extravaganza around President Clinton and the witchcraft hysteria in Salem 300 years ago. There are some similarities and some important differences.
> The tone of vituperation and the gut-shuddering hatred are reminiscent of the fury of the Salem ministers roaring down on the devil as though they would grind their heels in his face. Though there were never any witches there certainly is a Bill Clinton, and the underlying emotions are not all that different - the evident wish to end the Evil One's very existence (Miller, 1998, 27).

When Clinton learned of his possible impeachment, he, like the victims accused of witchcraft, *ultimately* put his faith, not in the legal system of the United States, but in God:

> I hope that we can move forward in a way that is fair, that is constitutional and that is timely ... It is in the hands of the congress and the people of the country - ultimately in the hands of God. There is nothing I can do (cited in Miller 1998, 1).

What Miller went on to note was that in spite of newspaper and television commentators' tone of high morality, the public, 'that great stallion that is so often led to water, this time dipped its head but refused to drink, perhaps scenting the stale smell of political manipulation'. Was this, therefore, an exercising of conscience?

But *was* there no witch, as Miller states, against whom the public turned? What of twenty-two year old Monica Lewinsky, and the woman she believed to be her friend but who betrayed her, Linda Tripp? Again Miller focuses on the male perspective, the male victim, an adulterer, paradoxically a hero, handsome, and loved

by women. *The Weekend Australian* ran an editorial column, 'Victim's name stained by Spin Doctors', on the same page as Miller's syndicated article, 'Into The Crucible Again'. The editorial produces evidence which does not concur with Miller's perceptions of Clinton as the victim and instead places Lewinsky in the role of victim:

> According to Dick Morris, the former special advisor to the President, when the Lewinski story broke, the White House strategy was one of "deceit, denial and delay" ... [Morris] believes that the White House began a concerted campaign to smear Lewinsky once it became clear that she was going to do a deal with Starr" (1998, 27).

In this version of the story Lewinsky is victimised by both the White House and Kenneth Starr. In spite of Miller's contrary statement, perhaps the public stallion *has* dipped its head and drunk the sullied water of political and judicial manipulation.

With political approval of any kind of victimisation it becomes easier for people to suppress their consciences. For instance, during colonially approved genocides, the indigenous inhabitants were viewed by those in power as subhuman, little value was placed on their lives. Women accused of being witches were also considered subhuman, that is, substantially inferior to white men. Gross writings denigrating women's sexuality, their bodily functions, and descriptions of women as monstrous were profuse, and well circulated. Prior to the persecutions, the Puritans of Salem were, one imagines, mostly people of conscience. Their ancestors had already suffered religious persecution and chosen another way of life that brought them to their 'New Jerusalem'. Because of this they were zealous protectors of their faith, and watchful for any lapses from the practise of their beliefs. This

also meant that when there were accusations of misbehaviour, or witchcraft, the Puritans were frequently extreme in their retribution.[52]

Those who act *without conscience*, in ways that make them seem so sure of their judgements, are the men in the film who sentence to death those who will not confess an allegiance with the Devil, even under torture. These men will not allow themselves to be swayed, or to listen to the 'whispering in [their] hearts'[53] even when an 'authority' such as the learned Reverend Hale sees what would be evident in less prejudiced persons: that Proctor, and others convicted of witchcraft, tell the truth - even knowing that they will die for this truth. Hale expresses his misgivings in the trials and in his faith:

> Let you not mistake your duty as I mistook my own. I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up (Miller 1996a, 115).

To retain one's conscience and deny association with the Devil, as Rebecca Nurse and other stalwarts of Salem did in the film, meant prolonged torture and death by hanging, but it also meant hope for others. Persecutions would end when the truth was known -

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[52] Discontent with extreme Puritanism gave rise to Quakerism which in the latter part of the seventeenth century spread in Southern and Eastern England and even as far as the Ottoman Empire. Far more than any other Protestant sects, Quakers gave both men and women full equality. Some of their leading members, such as Anne Conway and Van Helmont, were 'monistic vitalists' who believed there was no essential difference between spirit and body. They differed from the new men of science, including Descartes, on the subject of cosmic and animal mechanism. For the Quakers nature was not a machine but a living body (Merchant 1990, 256-258).

[53] This is a reference to Henry Reynolds' history of the genocide of Aboriginal Australians (1998). Elizabeth Dean in her review of Reynolds' book describes the 'first clash of conscience' (1998, 45).

that the Devil did not exist. One would imagine that historical characters were weaker than the stalwarts in the film, the choice of life being a cowardly but reasonable preference. However, as historical accounts confirm, some women endured the most horrific tortures because they refused to lie (Mies 1986, 82-83).

The Male Hero

Men, usually homosexual men, or the husbands of accused women, did suffer persecution as witches and associates of witches, as John Proctor and Giles Corey do in the film, but they were far less in number than the women. Corey is pressed to death in the film because he will not name petitioners who have supplied evidence in the defence of his wife, Rebecca Nurse. He pleads 'more weight, more weight' for the continual laying on of the stones that press all life out of him (Frieden and Elliott WWW 2000).

Proctor's heroic role is explained by Miller in the article written for *The New Yorker* (1996b, 158-164). Miller discusses his own life, the failure of his marriage, and his own guilt, behind the character of Proctor, and why the focus of the play and the film is placed on a male hero:

> My own marriage of twelve years was teetering and I knew more than I wished to know about where that blame lay. That John Proctor the sinner might overturn his paralyzing personal guilt and become the most forthright voice against the madness around him was a reassurance to me, and, I suppose, an inspiration: it demonstrated that a clear moral outcry could still spring even from an unambiguously blemished soul. Moving crabwise across the profusion of evidence, I sensed that I had at last found something of myself in it, and a play began to accumulate around this man (1996b, 162).

In view of Miller's statements it is not surprising that he imagines

from the position of a male. His protagonist in the film, Proctor, is an honest farming man, handsome in true Hollywood style and loved by two women. Miller's filmic dream is that of a masculine dream gone astray.[54] Rather than considering what it would be like to be a woman in the horrendous circumstances that women accused of witchcraft particularly suffered, Miller casts Elizabeth's adultererous husband as the film hero. Proctor exemplifies a man struggling with his conscience. He confesses to one sin, adultery, but he will not confess to the imaginary one of witchcraft and sign his name to the confession for all to see. His conscience will not allow him to give up his good name to save his life, the name that his sons will inherit: 'How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!' (Miller 1957, 328).

In both the play and film *The Crucible* is a masculine response to the persecutions. Miller places the responsibility for the protagonist's transgression at one extreme on female lust and at the other extreme with a cold and unfeeling married woman, exemplified in the character of Elizabeth Proctor. Man is the victim of lust or coldness. Miller, like the historical accusers of witchcraft, unintentially perpetuates the myths of women's excessive capacity for lust. This is a characteristic he portrays in the young females who gather in the forest with the West Indian slave, Tituba.

Suspicion of Proctor's adultery with Abigail was confirmed for Miller when he read part of Parris's report of Elizabeth's trial. Parris had observed in detail that Abigail lightly touched Elizabeth and then cried out that 'her fingers, her fingers, her fingers burned

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[54] When the relationship is no longer desired by the adulterer and an ex-lover becomes demanding - guilt ensues. Fiction mirrors life.

... '(Miller 1996b, 161). By this act Abigail effectively condemned Elizabeth to death. It was the fact that the Proctor's former servant had an apparent desire to convict Elizabeth and save John, that made the play conceivable for Miller: 'In no other instance could I find such a careful avoidance ... [or] attempt to differentiate between a wife's culpability and a husband's (1957, 42).

The Female Hero, the 'cunning woman', and the victim

In a review critical of the film's sexual politics Peter Brunette wrote:

> The only element of the story that doesn't successfully survive the double translation from the 17th century to the 50's to the present is the film's sexual politics. The climax of the plot turns on accusations of "harlotry," and we are asked to condemn Abigail ... for her wanton lust. This is an old story, of course, blaming women for sexual temptation, one that occurs throughout the great classics of the Western world, beginning with the story of Adam and Eve. This undoubtedly played well in the 50's, but rings false now (Brunette WWW 2000).

This is exactly the problem with the film. Not only does this part of the story 'ring false' it perpetuates views of women as tempters and harlots. There are ways to tell a story fairer to women and more truthful to history. That Abigail takes most of the blame in Miller's version of the story seems exceedingly biased. In the 'what ifs' of feminist imaginations her character could be viewed more sympathetically - even though Hytner captures some of the nuances of her confusion. She is portrayed in the film as a very young woman who probably was inexperienced in sex before meeting Proctor; because of him she was put out of her home by Elizabeth. Her life as an orphan would have been exceedingly difficult in a small Puritanical village in such circumstances, yet we see little of the hardships she would have experienced.

Elizabeth Proctor was amongst the first Salem women to be accused of witchcraft and examined in front of magistrates. During this examination her husband was also imprisoned. Elizabeth is depicted in the film as a frigid but courageous woman, yet her story could be retold to give a totally different slant to the drama of the witchcraft persecutions as presented by Miller. She, afterall, was the aggrieved party when her husband committed adultery. There could be many reasons for his behaviour, his lust rather than her coldness, for example.

Rebecca Nurse, as her name indicates, has a caring role in the community. As a supporting character we get just a glimpse of her heroism. Older women like Rebecca were selected for persecution because they were financially independent and held authority as healers, midwives and advisors. They were amongst the outspoken women resented by some of the villagers for their independence. Rebecca and Martha Corey were amongst the first women to be denounced as witches.

It is left for the viewer of the film to imagine the female heroes who would have existed amongst the persecuted women; the women whose cries were recorded in statement of the Salem Trials, like Rebecca Nurse: 'Oh Lord, help! It is false. I am clear. For my life now lies in your hands ...'; and Bridget Bishop, 'I am no witch. I am innocent. I know nothing of it'; and Elizabeth Howe 'If it was the last moment I was to live, God knows I am innocent ...' The cries continue, the reality of the times haunts us through the voices of these women. It is difficult for a woman reading their words to understand how they were not believed when innocence

was claimed under such duress. Martha Carrier said, 'I am wronged. It is a shameful thing that you should mind these folks that are out of their wits'. Mary Easty said, 'if it be possible no more innocent blood be shed ... I am clear of this sin'. Susannah Martin was another who denied dealing in witchcraft. Margaret Jacobs said, 'They told me if I would not confess I should be put down into the dungeon and would be hanged, would confess I should save my life' (Salem Office of Tourism and Cultural affairs 1997).

Trial records show that some of the accused had previous records of criminal activity, including witchcraft, but others were faithful churchgoers and people of high standing in the community (Salem Office of Tourism and Cultural affairs 1997). Women on the fringe of society, the impoverished, the elderly, the frail, and the handicapped, were easy scapegoats. Widows, and those deemed a nuisance or outside the control of men, were also likely to be accused of witchcraft. (Churchill 1985, 129-130; Russell 1997, 113-115). Intelligent, strong women who threatened or challenged men's scientific advances were deemed rebellious and particularly suffered, for they were outstanding, and therefore subject to accusations. Clearly, few women would have been exempt. People of colour, especially women, were also victims. The conflation of female sexuality and blackness in a white world is an old story, as Miller points out (Miller 1998, 27). For Tituba, the sole black character in the film, blackness has lethal results.

As mentioned before, undoubtedly more women were accused of witchcraft than men.[55] Riane Eisler writes about the overall scale of the persecutions of women considered dangerous to men:

> ... it was the Church that, as its ultimate "protection" of men from the "danger" of women, launched the Christian witchhunts - which left some towns almost without any female population, killed many thousands (according to some estimates millions) of woman so accused, and deprived Western medicine of invaluable herbal and other healing knowledge that had until then been passed on ... (Eisler 1995, 204).

Caryl Churchill emphasises the female tragedies that occurred during the English witchcraft persecutions by considering the depressed and difficult social situations in which the women lived:[56]

> One of the things that struck me was how petty and everyday the witches' offences were, and how different the atmosphere of actual English witchhunts seemed to be from my received idea, based on a slight knowledge of the European witchhunts and films and fiction, of burnings, hysteria and sexual orgies. I wanted to write a play about witches with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria and possession by the devil but about poverty, humiliation and prejudice, and how the women accused of witchcraft saw themselves (1985, 130-131).

Like Miller, Churchill chose to write about the theory that witchcraft existed in the minds of the persecutors; that witches, like Jews and blacks, were scapegoats in times of stress. She left aside what was for her an interesting theory - that witchcraft had existed as a survival of suppressed pre-Christian religions -

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[55] According to Merchant the ratio for the witch prosecutions was fifty women to one man (1990, 138). Figures, of course, vary from place to place. Jean Bodin, whose tract on witchcraft was one of the most brutal and sadistic of all pamphlets written against witches at the time, worked as consultant to the French government in persecution of witches. He also set the ratio of witch persecutions at fifty women to one man. Like Institoris and Sprenger in Germany, he singled out women for his attack. James I, in his *Daemonology* (1597), placed the ratio of women to men as twenty to one. Alexander Roberts (1616) believed the ratio to be one hundred to one. In England, during the years 1644 to 1645, under the influence of Mathew Hopkins, an English lawyer, several hundred women were put to death. Hopkins' campaigns to exterminate witches earned him the title of 'witch-finder general'. A calculation of English Home Circuit Court executions showed that out of 109 persons put to death, 102 were women. In some Swiss villages, after the waves of hysteria, there were scarcely any women left. In 1585, two villages in the Bishopric of Trier, Germany, were each left with only one female inhabitant (Merchant 1990, 138).

[56] Churchill wrote 'Vinegar Tom', a play about the persecutions of women in England during the witchcraft times (1985).

when she discovered for the first time:

> the extent of Christian teaching against women and saw the connections between medieval attitudes to witches and continuing attitudes to women in general. The women accused of witchcraft were often those on the edge of society, old, poor, single, sexually unconventional; the old herbal medical tradition of the cunning woman was suppressed by the rising medical professionalism of the male doctor (Churchill 1985, 130-131).

Cynthia Cockburn describes the effects of changing perceptions, brought about in part by the imposition of mechanistic approaches to nature over the vitalist nature associated with women's practices and knowledge:

> In the witch hunting years of the Inquisition thousands of women across Europe were ritually [hanged] burned or drowned in a frenzy of misogyny. It was a forerunner of the male Enlightenment (so-called) stamping out the remaining vestiges of women's autonomy, outlawing women's traditional forms of knowledge and installing the rule of Reason. The dawn of modern science was, as Francis Bacon put it in 1602, 'The Masculine Birth of Time' (Cockburn 1989, 30; Jenkins 1993, 65-66).

As Merchant points out, women's productive roles decreased under early capitalism: 'This was the beginning of a process that would ultimately transform them from an economic resource for their families' subsistence to a psychic resource for their husbands'. The cultural role played by female symbols and principles was also changing. Merchant describes the loss of plausibility in the 'female world soul, with its lower component, *Natura*, and the nurturing female earth' that had begun 'in a world increasingly influenced by mining technology essential to commercial capitalism'. New mercantile activities threatened the ideology of natural stratification in society. The older organic order of nature and society was breaking up (Merchant 1990, 155):

> Symbolic of these changes was the midwife and the witch. From the patriarchal perspective, the witch was a symbol of disorder in nature

> and society, both of which must be brought under control. The midwife symbolised female incompetence in her own natural sphere, reproduction, correctable through a technology invented and controlled by men - the forceps. But from a female perspective, witchcraft often represented a form of power by which the oppressed lower-class women could retaliate against social injustices, and a source of healing through the use of spirits and the regenerative powers of nature (Merchant 1990, 155).

Pregnant women were commonly attended by a midwife, and the death, deformity, and other tragedies that might occur to the mother or child were often laid at the midwife's door. The guilt and anger felt by the husband at the death of his wife or infant meant that he was likely to project these feelings upon the midwife, who was charged with negligence or, if no physical reason for the disaster could be found, with sorcery' (Russell 1997, 114). The midwives and healers who were special targets for persecution were among the women who challenged the hierarchy of the men of the 'new philosophy' or 'scientific revolution'. With their nature skills and their earthy knowledge, they practised what was known at the time as good witchcraft, or white magic (rather than black-magic);[57] but witch midwives were believed to 'surpass all other witches in their crimes' ... and the number of them was considered great (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 556). In the film, Goody Osborne and Sarah Good had acted as midwives when babes had been stillborn (Miller 1996a, 34) and therefore were likely to be accused of witchcraft.

Women were victimised whenever there were unexpected deaths,

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[57] See Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, in which she writes about a fictional witch-hunt set in the Black-American town of Ruby in 1976. The men of the town set out to kill the women who live outside their control - those who act as midwives and nurturers. The women give passion and protection to the black and white people who walk the road from the town to the 'Convent'. One man's remorse was 'at having become what the Old Fathers cursed: the kind of man who set himself up to judge, rout and destroy the needy, the defenceless, the different' (1998, 302).

traumatic events, or 'natural' disasters because they represented an unruly nature. Martha Corey is accused of witchcraft in the film because she *predicted* that ailing pigs would die (Miller, 1996a, 62). The association of women with nature and natural catastrophes is explicit in *Malleus Maleficarum,* as it probes into the ways women raise and stir up hailstorms and tempest, and cause lightning to blast both men and beasts (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 320-321). In one recording, a violent hailstorm which destroyed all the fruit, crops and vineyards in country near the German town of Salzburg was brought to the attention of the Inquisition because many of the townspeople believed that it was caused by witchcraft. Two women were taken to different prisons and examined separately. One woman:

> ... although undoubtedly well provided with that evil gift of silence which is the constant bane of judges ... at the first trial affirmed that she was innocent ... suddenly, when she had been freed from her chains, although it was in the torture chamber, she fully laid bare all the crimes which she had committed. For when she was questioned by the notary of the Inquisition upon the accusations which had been brought against her of harm done to men and cattle, by reason of which she had been gravely suspected of being a witch, although there had been no witness to prove that she had abjured the Faith or performed coitus with an Incubus devil (for she had been most secret); nevertheless, after she had confessed to the harm she had caused to animals and men, she acknowledged also all that she was asked concerning the abjuration of the Faith, and copulation committed with an Incubus devil; saying that for more than eighteen years she had given her body to an Incubus devil with a complete abnegation of the Faith (cited in Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 321).

The poor, tortured woman goes on to describe how, in league with the Devil, she brought about a hailstorm. Another accused woman, after being 'exposed to the very gentlest questions, being suspended hardly clear of the ground by her thumbs', told a similar, very detailed, story. The chapter ends: 'Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that, just as easily as they [witches] raise hailstorms,

so can they cause lightening and storms at sea' (cited in Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 321-323).

At the time of the witchcraft persecutions, women were believed to have extraordinary powers over men and their sexual abilities. Lyndal Roper writes that men feared impotence, the bodily ill which women had brought about:

> Unlike womanhood, manhood was experienced as a fragile achievement, and masculine superiority was seen as a threat. Women who threatened 'that he should neither go up nor down with any love' were fearsome creatures. In the phrase which was often used to describe this ability, 'stealing manhood', the interconnections between biological and cultural manhood found vivid expression. In this sense women were imagined to have the power of castration - and the power to restore potency (Roper 1991, 101).

The Reverend Montague Summers' 'Introduction' to *Malleus Maleficarum,* written in 1946 (15-24),[58] indicates his acceptance of the blatantly denigrating and superstitious statements about females, witches and witchcraft throughout the Treatise, which purports to investigate questions such as:

> 'Whether the Belief that there are such Beings as Witches is so Essential part of the Catholic Faith that Obstinancy to maintain the Opposite [sic] Opinion manifestly savours of Heresy' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 33).
>
> 'If it be in Accordance with the Catholic Faith to maintain that in Order to bring about some Effect of Magic, the Devil must intimately

[58] The unabridged text of *Malleus Maleficarum* translated by Summers was first published in 1928. His 'Introduction' (included in Kramer and Sprenger 1971) provides a background to the authors, Kramer and Sprenger. Summers writes in praise of 'the *Malleus*' saying that it is 'among the most important, wisest, and weightiest books in the world'. In his opinion there is not 'a problem, a complexity, a difficulty, which had not been foreseen, discussed and resolved by Kramer and Sprenger'. His admiration of the work of the two men was also for their 'clarity, their 'unflinching logic', and their 'scrupulous impartiality' of judgement '... it is a work that must irresistibly capture the attention of all men who think, all who see, or are endeavouring to see, the ultimate reality beyond the accidents of matter, time and space'. Summers also documents a history of witchcraft in Europe from as early as 583 when it was believed that one of the leading officials of the French court had administered to the King's son medicines that he obtained from certain witches of Paris (Summers 1946, 15-24).

co-operate with the Witch, or whether one without the other, that is to say, the devil without the witch, or conversely, could produce such an Effect' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 53).

'Whether Children can be Generated by Incubi and Succubi' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 72).

'Concerning Witches who copulate with Devils. Why is it that Women are chiefly addicted to Evil Superstitions?'(Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 111).

'Whether Witches can Sway the Minds of Men to Love or Hatred' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 125).

'Whether Witches may work with some Prestidigitatory Illusion so that the Male Organ appears to be entirely removed and separate from the Body' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 144).

The manner in which witches may be identified is also set down in *Malleus Maleficarum*, together with the power and practices of witches, their relationships with the Devil and reasons for the persecution of witches. The Treatise states that woman are: 'by nature more sinful than man', 'an evil of nature', that 'there is no wrath like the wrath of a woman', that they are 'weak', with 'slippery tongues', 'very impressionable', 'feebler both in mind and body', 'intellectually like children', 'more carnal than man', and, 'of a different nature to men', because:

there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, rib of the breast, which is bent as if it were in a contrary direction to a man' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 114-117).

Eve and women are further denigrated:

And it is clear in the case of the first woman that she had little faith; for when the serpent asked why they did not eat of every tree in Paradise, she answered: Of every tree, ... lest perchance we die. Thereby she showed that she doubted, and had little faith in the word of God. And all this is indicated by the etymology of the word; for *Femina* comes from *Fe* and *Minus*, since she is ever weaker to hold and preserve the faith' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 117).

Exaggerated myths of women as evil and as monstrous tempters, branching from the biblical 'Genesis', are reinforced in the Treatise. In the biblical hierarchy, nature was below man. Woman was created as an afterthought. Women were associated with the wild in nonhuman nature because of their supposed lustful, wild, monstrous, characters. Death, *'le grand mort*, the dreaded event in the cycle of nature, became associated with the 'little death', known as *'le petit mort'*, associated with sexual intercourse, orgasm, women and their lusts.

Kramer and Sprenger regretted that 'this age [the 1400s] is dominated by women' (1971, 364), but in early modern Europe, the assumption of a nature-culture dichotomy was used as a justification for keeping women in their place in the established hierarchical order of nature, where they were placed below men. The reaction against the disorder in nature symbolised by women was directed not only at lower-class witches, but at the queen responsible for the persecution of Protestants, Mary Tudor, and the queen regent, Mary of Lorraine. According to the Scottish Protestant reformer, John Knox, these Catholic rulers seemed to be overturning the order of nature (Merchant 1990, 144). Churchill's play 'Vinegar Tom', co-produced with 'The Monstrous Regiment' (1985, 129), alludes to Knox's misogynist polemic: *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558); but in the same year that *'The Blast'* was published Protestant Elizabeth came to the throne and Knox, in a most difficult political situation, was forced to apologise (Merchant 1990, 144).

Knox believed that woman's role was that of an obedient servant. Since she was physically weaker than a man, her place was below

his. Women's 'natural weaknesses' and 'inordinate appetites' needed, in his opinion, to be 'repressed and bridled'. Knox also thought that there was a natural order established by God that corresponded to the 'natural body of man'. In society, therefore, 'the ruling head must be a man, for a woman's rule creates a monster' (cited in Merchant 1990, 145).

Clearly women were regarded, by both Catholic and Protestant mysogynists alike, as naturally inferior, and designed by the Creator as a snare to tempt men to indulge in the sins of the flesh' (Roper 1991, 13). Those carrying out the witchhunts justified their acts by referring to the Bible: Moses decreed that witches should not be allowed to live, and St Paul held the same view (Wheatley 1971, 13). Paul also expressed the belief that because of Eve and her deception by the serpent both should suffer (Roper 1991, 13). The serpent was viewed as an evil companion of witches by the writers of *Malleus Maleficarum* 'for the serpent was the devil's first instrument by which he deceived mankind' against whom a warning is issued (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 385).

Maria Mies relates some of women's suffering brought about by Paul's edict. She tells the stories of women whose bodies broke during torture. One, Enneke Fristenares, from Münster, Germany withstood the most horrendous torture without confessing the crimes of which she was accused:

> After the accused had been asked in vain to confess, Dr. Gogravius announced the order of torture ... He asked her to tell the truth, because the painful interrogation would make her confess anyway and double the punisment ... after this the first degree of torture was applied to her.
> Then the judge proceeded to the second degree of torture. She was led

> to the torture chamber, she was undressed, tied down and interrogated. She denied to have done anything ... As she remained stubborn they proceeded to the third degree and her thumbs were put into screws. Because she screamed so horribly they put a block into her mouth and continued screwing her thumbs. Fifty minutes this went on, the screws were loosened and tightened alternatively. But she pleaded her innocence. She also did not weep but only shouted, 'I am not guilty. O Jesus come and help me.' Then, 'Your Lordship, take me and kill me.' Then they proceeded to the fourth degree, the Spanish Boots ... As she did not weep Dr Gogravius worried whether the accused might have been made insensitive against pain through sorcery. Therefore he again asked the executioner to undress her and find out whether there was anything suspicious about her body. Whereupon the executioner reported he had examined everything meticulously but had not found anything. Again he was ordered to apply the Spanish Boots. The accused however continued to assert her innocence and screamed 'O Jesus I haven't done it, I haven't done it, Your Lordship kill me. I am not guilty, I am not guilty!' ... This order went on for 30 minutes without result.
>
> Then Dr Gogravius ordered the fifth degree:
>
> The accused was hung up and beaten with two rods - up to 30 strokes. She was so exhausted that she said she would confess, but with regard to the specific accusations she continued to deny that she had committed any of the crimes. The executioner had to pull her up till her arms were twisted out of their joints. For six minutes this torture lasted. Then she was beaten up again, and again her thumbs were put into screws and her legs into Spanish Boots. But the accused continued to deny that she had anything to do with the devil.
>
> As Dr Gogravius came to the conclusion that the torture had been correctly applied, according to the rules, and after the executioner stated the accused would not survive further torturing Dr Gogravius ordered the accused to be taken down and unbound. He ordered the executioner to set her limbs in the right place and nurse her (cited in Mies 1986, 82-83).

The interrogation of witches also provided the model for the development of the new scientific method of extracting the secrets of nature's womb. As woman's womb had symbolically yielded to the forceps, so nature's 'womb' harbored secrets which could be wrested from her through technology (Merchant 1990, 168-9). In *Witch-Hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy,* Brian Easlea makes the connection between the domination of women and the domination of nature at the time of the Salem trials. He quotes a bizarre seventeenth century verse by Henry Vaughan which is suggestive

of the rape of a woman and the rape of the land:

> I summoned nature; pierced through all her store:
> Broke up some seals, which none had touched before;
> Her womb, her bosom, and her head,
> Where all her secrets lay abed,
> I rifled quite; and having past
> Through all the creatures, came at last
> To search myself, where I did find
> Traces and sounds of a strange kind (Easlea 1980, 252). [59]

Witchcraft, the natural, and the supernatural

Eroticism, nature and forests are linked in *The Crucible.* In an early scene young girls leave their homes to go to the forest in the night to join Tituba in the casting of spells that will bring the men of their desires to them. The forest where they meet is filmed in muted grey-green colours, a device which creates an ominous quality and a sense of the gothic supernatural as the camera high overhead focuses down through the night mist on the women. This, with the gloom of the *mise en scene,* provides the impression of a supernatural, omniscient observer, one closer to the Devil than God. The bayside village of Salem is on the edge of forests that stretch far to the west. In the forest fringes illicit meetings, including Proctor and Abigail's, take place. Deeper into the forest Abigail meets with the other girls to practise their witchcraft with Tituba. Forests exist in Western folk-tales and mythology more as dangerous places than places of healing, where wolves and men wait to ensnare women and girls like Red-Riding-Hood. From wilderness and forests come Indians as well as the Devil. Parris has parishioners whose relatives have been killed by Indians,

[59] This verse is included as a reminder of the kind of language that is currently used during wars against women and the Earth: the 'thrust' of penile war missiles and the 'rape' of 'virgin' lands, for example.

including Abigail's mother and father (Miller 1957, 238).

The Bible has another view of wilderness, one not sought out by earlier colonists. Wilderness, in 'Revelation', is a godly place and a woman's place; a place to which Mary escapes with her child, Jesus (Revelation 12:1-17). Woman is associated with wilderness and, in this case, not with the Devil but with God:

> *And she brought forth a man child ...*
> *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God ...*
> *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; ...*
> *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent ...*
> *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ...*
> *And when the dragon saw that he was cast into the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*
> *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly* ***into the wilderness, into her place*** *...*
> (Gardner 1996, 149, emphasis mine).

In 'The Forest Primarily Evil' and 'A Peculiar Arborary, *Beloved*', Jhan Hochman discusses the different perceptions of trees and forests in two films. In *Beloved*, individual trees give humans comfort; knowledge of trees, evident throughout the film, 'nudges readers toward understanding the purpose and existence of trees as their own, a purpose and existence at odd with the status of commodities' (1998, 97):

> Unlike the forest, trees are not dangerous, nor are they seen as artifact and commodity. The film's frequent identification of plants and especially trees 'throws a subtle wrench in the machine's representation of trees as artifacts, commodities, and timber ... Knowledge of differences in families and individual trees indicates trees as more than decorative, as important enough not to kill for convenience or taste, as important enough to be studied/appreciated/understood rather than just aestheticized (Hochman 1998, 97).

In treetops slave women used to hang their babies out of harm's way where they could be seen whilst the women worked in the fields (1998, 103); whereas in *Deliverance* forests are envisaged as adversary and places of endangerment. Hochman examines this 'forest-fear':

> To undermine forest-fear, it must be dragged into the open to see what inflames and fuels it. I survey *Deliverance*'s forests and suggest three fearful locales from which to be delivered: ghetto, Dantean hell, and site (a place where various rites are enacted). These places are mapped and recounted, exposing the dread lurking in *Deliverance*'s Cahulawassee Forest. *Deliverance* may pay lip and eye service to the endangered forest that is prey to predatory development, but this concern is undermined by a not-inconspicuous depiction of a forest full of dangers. Consequently, and against the film's ostensible desire that viewers comprehend the gravity of disappeared and threatened forests, relief or apathy is what persists with the destruction of *Deliverance*'s threatening forest (1998, 72).

The forest in *The Crucible* is a contaminating place where characters like Elizabeth Proctor are never seen. Her image of purity is not associated with places considered evil but, on one occasion, with a place of danger. The cliffhead where she stands with John before his execution is a metaphorical and literal precipice, between land and sea. Elizabeth is positioned in this in-between place as she struggles with her conscience and her conflicting desires: to keep her husband, the father of her children, or to allow him the strength of his conscience - which will mean his death, but also the survival of the community.

The movement of characters from the forest to the sea is one that could be anticipated as a symbolic cleansing movement from a place believed to be evil (the forest) to a redeeming place of water - it is to the water that the young girls run, screaming, after Betty attempts to leap out of a window - but it is in the bay that Mary,

the Proctors' housemaid, points her finger at Proctor, accusing him of witchcraft. Evil seeps into place and even the water around Salem becomes tainted in susceptible imaginations.

The witchhunts, Miller reminds us, had devastating effects not only on those swept up in the frenzy, but also on neighbours, relations, offspring, and environments. After the trials ended certain farms which had belonged to the victims were left to ruin, and for more than a century no one would buy them or live on them' (Miller 1968, 47). Hale, the witchcraft 'expert', who becomes increasingly dismayed at the judges' severity and the incarceration of villagers, says:

> Excellency, there are orphans wandering from house to house; abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere ... (Miller 1957, 319).

History and Place

Reports of the Salem Trials record that the behaviour of nine-year old Elizabeth and eleven-year-old Abigail - 'blaspemous screaming, convulsive seizures, trance-like states and mysterious spells' - spread to other girls in the village. Baffled physicians concluded the girls were under the influence of Satan. Prayer services and 'counter magic was used to reveal the identities of the 'witches'. Three women were arrested, one of them, Tituba, confessed under pressure. Others in the community then came forward to testify that they had 'seen strange apparitions of some of the community members'. In 1692 the English governor, Sir William Phips, issued a special commission for seven magistrates to hear cases in Salem. These magistrates based their judgements

and evaluations on various kinds of intangible evidence, including confessions, supernatural attributes (such as 'witchmarks'), and reactions of the afflicted girls. Spectral evidence, based on the assumption that the devil could assume the 'specter' of an innocent person, was included despite its controversial nature (Salem Office of Tourism and Cultural Affairs 1997).

Local geography played a role in the Salem craze. The uncertain legal status of Salem Village, as opposed to Salem Town, meant a divided community. Most of the accusers lived on the west side of Salem Village; and most of the accused and those who supported them lived in the Town on the east side. The Village resented both its dependence on the Town and the Town's failure to exercise its authority to maintain tranquility. The witchcraft episode generated divisions which also occurred *within* the Village and were exacerbated by conflict and hard feelings towards an outgoing church minister (Bayley) and an incoming minister (Parris) with his supporters and opponents. As Jeffrey Russell's history records, the witchcraft episode did not shift the divisions in the community in any fundamental way, but it did lay bare the intensity with which the moral divisions of a Puritanical society were expressed (1997, 118-120).

In Preserved Smith's history of the Enlightenment the events surrounding the trials, rather than being mainly due to the sexual desire of a young woman for a married man, are considered due to a combination of other elements that are included in the film: the superstition of the local clergyman, Parris, the outlandish beliefs of the slave, Tituba, and the excitable imagination of frightened children. This, according to Smith, led to the wholesale accusations

of enchantment that excited the colony to fever heat (1962, 454-457).

The witchcraft trials in the British American colonies began in 1690 and ended in 1692 when, after an interval, trials were resumed before the regular courts and three convicted people were pardoned. Proceedings against all the accused were then stopped and the jails were cleared (Smith 1962, 455). The number of witches executed in was, according to Smith, probably thirty-five in all of America's history (Smith 1962, 455).[60] The Salem Trials were the last in America, as well as the worst. The number of those condemned as witches at Salem was minimal when compared to victims in Europe where persecutions continued during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, long after the end of the Salem Trials.[61]

As we have seen, the reasons for the witchhunts were complex and various. The madness of the times was, at least in part, because of religious and superstitious beliefs fanned by the Church, but Maria Mies argues that the persecution of witches 'was not a remnant of the irrational "dark" Middle Ages' (Mies 1986, 83). The craze was also brought about by changing economics, the rise of modern society and the European bourgeoisie, scientific research, and the uprising of new technologies, a finding to which Mies

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[60] Outside of Connecticut and Massachusetts, only one woman was ever put to death for the crime of witchcraft; this was in Maryland (Smith 1962, 454-457).

[61] In Europe more women were executed for witchcraft than for all other crimes put together (Easlea 1980, 3). Hundreds of thousands of women, mostly in the German principalities, were accused of witchcraft, tortured into signing confessions, and then further tortured in a public ritual before being burned at the stake (Smith 1962, 457; Spretnak 1997, 56). The last wholesale burning was in Germany, in 1679, when the archbishop of Salzburg sentenced 97 people to death. Trials then became fewer, but even a high-born nun, a woman of sixty-nine, was executed after being made to face the usual tortures and to confess (Smith 1962, 454-457). After this, there was a ten-year witch war in Bavaria which ended in 1776. Two witches were burned in Switzerland, in 1782, and two in Poland in 1793, before the witchcraft persecutions came, finally, to an end (Smith 1962, 456). Estimates of the number of witches who died vary from 30,000 to several million (Daly 1985, 63; Eisler 1995, 204).

gives prominence:

> The persecution and burning of the midwives as witches was directly connected to the emergence of modern society: the professionalisation of medicine, the rise of *medicine* as a 'natural science', the rise of *science* and of *modern economy* (Mies 1986, 83).

Mies also points out that the hope of financial gain can be seen as one of the main reasons for the spread of the witch hysteria and why hardly anyone was acquitted. The witchhunt was business used 'for the private enrichment of bankrupt princes, of lawyers, doctors, judges and professors, but also for such public affairs as financing wars, building up a bureaucracy, infrastructural measures, and finally, the new absolute state' (Mies 1986, 87). The confiscated property of condemned witches helped to swell the coffers. The authors of *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), describe the way that money 'vanishes' after the confession of witches:

> In the Third Part of this work we shall treat of the extermination of witches, which is the ultimate remedy. For this is the last recourse of the Church, to which she is bound by Divine commandment. For it has been said: Ye shall not suffer witches to live upon the earth. ... they may be freed from the devil's power by true confession ... a sign that they have been delivered is that, after confession, all the money in their purses or coffers vanishes (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 408).

Even monks made money by selling pictures of saints that, if swallowed, would protect the buyers from being afflicted by witchcraft. Self-appointed witch-commissars extracted funds by blackmail for the so-called eradication of pests. If payment was refused by a person, then that person was suspected of being a sorceror, a witch, or a sympathiser (Mies, 1986, 86).

The economic and social changes of a rising modern society would have been less evident in the small Puritan town of Salem than in

the populations of larger towns and cities of Europe where the emphasis on rationality consolidated efforts to wipe out superstition, sorcery, the soothsayers, the magicians, and those who practised witchcraft. But, as mentioned before, it was *superstition*, a belief in the Devil as well as in God, that supported the theocracy and the Inquisitors during the witchcraft trials, in Salem as well as Europe. Paradoxically, superstition was supported by rigorous academic argument, and approved by ecclesiastical and secular scholars in treatese such as *Malleus Maleficarum.*

Literacy rose with the facility of the new printing presses, but arguments for and against the persecutions persisted in Europe into the second half of the eighteenth century. Some decried belief in the Devil and witches in ways that endangered them, so close were they to heresy. If the existence of the Devil and witches was a superstitious belief, then what of God's words? What of the existence of God?

In his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765) Blackstone said:

> To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed Word of God in various passages of the Old and New Testament; and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony (cited in Smith 1962, 53).

According to Smith, John Wesley also regretted the ceasing of witchcraft. He wrote in his *Journal* (1768):

> it is true that the English in general and most men of learning in Europe have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it. ... Infidels have hooted witchcraft

> out of the world ... They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible (cited in Smith 1962, 454).

Daniel Defoe explained the concurrent decline of superstition and the rise of atheism in the lines:

> But devils nor men the being of God denied,
> Till men of late found out new ways to sin,
> And turned the devil out to let the atheist in (cited in Smith, 1962, 450).

Cartoons by Hogarth and pamphlets by Defoe and Goldsmith ridiculed demonology, whilst others continued in their insistance (Smith 1962, 452). Increase Mather, a leading divine, argued for the reality of magic and sorcery, but he and other defenders of superstition were mocked by literary leaders and cartoonists (cited in Smith 1962, 456).

What did finally bring the Salem persecutions and trials to an end?[62] After twenty people had been executed, one man, Thomas Brattle, wrote a letter criticizing the witchcraft trials. This letter had a great impact on Governor Phips, who ordered that reliance on spectral and intangible evidence was no longer to be allowed in trials. Earlier, Nathaniel Saltonstall resigned from the Salem court, dissatisfied with its procedures (Salem Office of Tourism and Cultural Affairs 1997). Smith reports the vanquishing of 'superstition and intolerance' by the eighteenth century rationalists who were 'the enemies of all that is absurd, and of all that is cruel in human institutions' (1962, 451). He also states that public indignation drove Parris from his church; and that Judge Sewell finally confessed

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[62] James Frazer reports that there are places throughout the world where rituals against witches still persist (1978 734-736).

his error in church and asked pardon of God and man. The General Court of Massachusetts, in 1696, appointed a day of fasting and humiliation to ask divine foregiveness for 'the late tragedy raised amongst us by Satan and his instruments, by the awful judgement of God' (cited in Smith 1962, 455-6). There was no questioning of the theology of witchcraft; rather that Jurors had failed to find inner conviction that they knew enough to convict on the basis of their conjectures (Kors and Peters 1972, 358-359). However, as later writers have noted - including Maria Mies, Brian Easlea, and Carolyn Merchant - many of the rationalists continued their cruelties expressly because they were concerned with the rational, not with feelings. Women's feelings had not concerned their persecutors when they were literally being stretched to their limits, and these limits, for scientific reasons, needed to be ascertained. The torture chambers, according to Mies, were:

> the laboratories where the texture, the anatomy, the resistance of the human body - mainly the female body - were studied. One might say that modern medicine and the male hegemony over this vital field were established on the base of millions of crushed, maimed, torn, disfigured and finally burnt, female bodies (1986, 83).

Not surprisingly then, the Enlightenment rationalists had little compassion for the other animal objects of their scientific experiments. Animals were believed to be soul-less and without feelings, so they were subjected to the most apalling cruelties, some of which still continue in the research and development of products for human use (Merchant 1990, 182-183). Francis Bacon used the same methods and ideology 'to examine nature that the witch-persecutioners used to extract secrets from witches, namely torture, destruction, violence' (Mies 1986, 87; Merchant 1990, 164-177).

Conclusion

Although *The Crucible* explicitly portrays the effects of theocratic and secular oppressions, and Miller's stated identification is with a male victim and adulterer, his underlying concerns are related to the dangers of history repeating itself, rather than to the specific domination of women, and their misunderstood relationships with nature. The persecution of Salem witches is Miller's metaphor for the persecutions of all time. His politics are against repressive regimes and institutions which instigate fear fed by superstition and ignorance.

One of the most insidious and fearful things of the witch persecutions was the silence of learned men who must have doubted, as Brattle and Saltonstall doubted, yet who, unlike these two men, did nothing. After examining *Malleus Maleficarum,* the reverent Doctors of the University of Cologne gave their 'unanimous approval' of the Treatise (Kramer and Sprenger,1971, 570). In doing so they prepared themselves against the 'evil chance ignorant and ill-intentioned men should suppose that the aforesaid Rectors of the faculty and the Professors of the Order of Preachers are not wholly at one in their view of these matters' (Kramer and Sprenger 1971, 570).

The continued popularity of *The Crucible* is most likely because viewers and audiences recognise that there are periods in every century - particularly during authorised oppressions-when fear is at its greatest - that people give up their consciences.[63] Although the persecutors in *The Crucible* are male, the crowds who watch

the executions and the villagers who fail to protest are of both sexes, equally fearful and equally complicit in guilt. In the matter of public terror divesting a man of conscience, the film is universal in meaning and valid for men and women for this time and the future. As the reviewer Randy Nelson observes, 'such a movie and play do not offer an escapist form of entertainment but invite the audience to consider instead what it means to be human in a sinful world:

> The Crucible is neither a perfect film nor a perfect play, but it does probe age-old themes. It raises questions about truth and evil and the power of the lie. It causes us to wonder about adherence to law and to principle that may lead to order but not to justice. It demonstrates the power of sexuality and the destructive consequences of revenge. It warns of religious fervor left to its own devices. And it pleas passionately for a human dignity and integrity more important than any abstract principle (Nelson WWW 2000).

The Crucible, then, is not only a means to further study the patriarchal oppressions of the Church and the relationship of women with the rest of nature during the witch persecutions, but also a means to examine the complex and changing perceptions of God, the Devil, and Creation at the time, and the relevance of these perceptions to the present. By revisiting the Bible and other texts, such as *Malleus Maleficarum*, we are reminded of the ways in which stories, centuries old, continue into the present, and the ways they are used to authorise violence. These stories run deeply into Western culture, often in unconscious ways, perpetuating images of women as lustful, monstrous, and unruly. The film's

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[63] By 'popularity' I mean that the story of *The Crucible* has survived over a considerable period of time, however, reception of the film was not was not, overall, enthusiastic. As Brunette reports: 'Despite strong performances by the lead characters and some laudatory reviews, the movie did not achieve the anticipated critical nor commercial success. Scant attention was paid when Academy Award nominations were handed out. And within two months of its release, *The Crucible* was relegated to the bargain theaters' (Brunette WWW 2000).

allegory is relevant in an ecofeminist analysis of oppressions and wars against women and nature, and those whose sex, class, age, race, colour, creed, or species, makes them a target for persecution because they are weaker or different.[64]

Discussion of these oppressions continues in the following chapters. The next chapter, 'Gambling on God and Other Follies in*Oscar and Lucinda'*, relates to protagonists living in mid-nineteenth century Australia, more than one and a half centuries after the Salem Trials, under the colonialist constraints of religion, the Church and the out of place values of Victorian society.

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[64] If one can judge by the current Pope's public apologies he has had a recent stirring of conscience. Included in his 1998-2000 programme of apologies is his request for the forgiveness of victims for the Christian Church's role during the Inquisition. Yet the Pope continues to refuse to give equal status to women, or to allow full entry to the Church to homosexual men and women. As part of his programme the Pope plans to apologise for the Holocaust and the Hugenot massacres of 1572 (*Weekend Australian.* 1998b, 21).

Chapter Three

Gambling on God and other Follies in *Oscar and Lucinda*

The Lord is my shepherd
I shall not want
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake
(Psalm 23:3).[65]

Oscar and Lucinda (1997), directed by Gillian Armstrong, is from Laura Jones' (1998) film adaptation of Peter Carey's (1988) Booker Prize winning novel of the same name. Jones' script follows Carey's classic theme of a journey; a journey made between England and an ancient country that was deludedly regarded by colonisers as 'new' - Australia. Film and novel, both framed within the first person narration of Oscar's great-grandson, are complementary; but the meditations in the novel on the nature of God, the sacred and the land - meditations that are explored throughout this thesis - do not interpret easily to the screen.[66] Furthermore, emphases on religion and spirituality do not guarantee the mainstream audiences needed to produce box office takings adequate for major film productions.[67] The eccentric love-story and follies of Oscar

[65] Carey 1988, 443.

[66] I have relied on the density of Carey's novel to fill in the gaps of the film-script and the film in this chapter, particularly in relation to Aborigines, Christianity, colonialism, and nature. Oscar's journey is charted in the novel through chapters relating to the Bible. For example, 'The Church', 'The Advent Wreath', 'The Anglican Church', 'A Prayer', 'Christian Stories'; and 'Mary Magdalene'.

[67] Armstrong directs her work towards mainstream and international audiences by casting an internationally recognised actor as Oscar, and a rising 'star' as Lucinda. Yet *The Crucible*, for example, did not achieve box-office success, inspite of the fact that well-known actors performed leading roles.

Hopkins and Lucinda Leplastrier satisfy these demands, as do the costume and production designs and Geoffrey Simpson's cinematography.

Several reviews of the film on the world-wide-web lauded the camera-work, and the 'symbolic and enchanting journey' (Brandon WWW 2000), yet were uncertain about the film's award-winning capacity. As usual there were diverse opinions about various issues in the reviews, and even though *Oscar and Lucinda* was not considered Oscar-winning material, most were appreciative.[68] Jay Carr wrote that Armstrong's film was 'the most exotic and original romance since *The Piano*, which it exceeds in its incongruity between its lush untamed setting and the artefact brought into its so-called civilised land' (Carr, WWW 2000). Christopher Brandon described the film as 'a gamble with general audiences', but one that 'should appeal to discriminating movie goers' (Brandon, WWW 2000). *Time* was not alone when it rated the film amongst the year's best ten (Time, and Brogan, WWW 2000). It was also considered 'one of the year's best looking films' (Hunter WWW 2000). Joan Ellis wrote: 'The sight of the glass church floating on a river barge ranks high on my list of memorable metaphor (WWW 2000). Andrew Worsdale, appreciated the filming of the 'Australian outback'. He also wrote, 'beautiful camera-work aside, Gillian Armstrong's film of *Oscar and Lucinda* struggles to translate the wonders of Peter Carey's prose onto the screen ... imagining the movie while reading the book was, for me, more of a cinematic experience (Worsdale WWW 2000).[69]

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[68] Terry Brogan wrote: 'Come Academy Award time, the film may not shore up statuettes (it's a little too independent in spirit to appeal to the voters), but the time you spend in the darkened theater with *Oscar and Lucinda* will yield more satisfaction than whatever overblown film they choose to reward' (Brogan cited WWW, 2000).

The real depth of *Oscar and Lucinda* - underneath the 'scarves and buttons' of a Victorian love story (Carey 1988, 190) - is in the stories that are not of major concern to reviewers: Aboriginal stories, lost stories, insect stories, cedar stories, women's stories, as well as the biblical stories that shape Western culture. In *Oscar and Lucinda,* characters are led astray when they interpret Christian stories to suit their whims, their passions and their ambitions.

In a 'voice-over' the narrator introduces himself as a story-teller. He tells us that he would have no story to tell if his great-grandfather had not wagered everything to bring a church to Boat Harbour.[70] The narrator provides background throughout the film, but it is not until the film's end that we see him as he steers his outboard motor-boat down the Bellinger River with a young boy in the prow. Apart from these two, the river is a deserted place, wild, with trees growing down to its calm edges, the water stirred only by the wash of the boat. A weatherboard church then moves across the screen by unseen means before disappearing. Rapid flash-backs follow these opening scenes. The *mise en scene* provides an impression of some of the changes in the development and treatment of rivers, the land and cities, as they link the twentieth century with the nineteenth century, and the church, the narrator and the river, with Lucinda and the narrator's great grandfather, Oscar.

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[69] To take Worsdale's connection further, the combination of the novel with the film intensified, for me, not only the cinematic experience, but also the experience of *re*reading the novel.

[70] The Bellinger is in New South Wales but in fact river scenes were filmed on the Clarence (NSW) (Jones 1998, 151).

Lucinda meets Oscar for the first time when returning to Sydney from London on the *Leviathan*, with machinery for her newly purchased glass factory bought with her inheritance from her mother. Lucinda's fortune comes from the subdivision of land at Mitchell's Creek, New South Wales: five farms of four thousand acres apiece, including their family home (Jones 1998, 21). Lucinda believes that her 'fortune is unearned. It is the fruit of ... clever subdivision' bought by the labour of her mother and her father and 'the blood of the blacks of Dharak'. She has 'no right to it' (Carey 1988, 427). As we see in the film, Lucinda tries to dispose of this money by purchasing the glass factory, by gambling, and by wagering all that remains on Oscar's safety during his journey from Sydney to Boat Harbour.

The theft of Aboriginal land is one of the multiple sub-themes that flow from Carey's novel to the film, reflecting the mid-nineteenth century sense of change and movement. Land, including the land where Lucinda grew up, is being colonised, surveyed, pegged and divided, as European travellers, explorers, and settlers exploit Australia, the country which they expect to support them. Sydney is the developing port where Lucinda disembarks after travelling from the country, manipulating her uncomfortable hooped skirt, her bag, and the cauliflower that she has been given by the barge-owner. These constraints prefigure the greater restraints that will be imposed on Lucinda during her time in Sydney - and in her association with Oscar. Sydney is the destination of ministers of religion, including Oscar, who are exported from England to impose Christian stories on the new settlers and an ancient

Aboriginal culture, as well as on unappreciative cedar cutters. These characters we see later in the film; they are the frontiermen who log the forests and clear land for themselves and other colonialists. The film's under-stories remind the viewer that with the colonisation and remaking of 'Home', come genocide,[71] ecological destruction, war, and rape.[72] The degradation of Australia by Europeans - and their flora and fauna unsuited to fragile and ancient antipodean soils - is symbolised by the creatures that are pulleyed, craned and carted on board the monstrous ship, the Ark-like *Leviathan*[73] which transports cows, sheep, llamas, and birds in crates marked 'Acclimatisation Society of New South Wales'.

> *This great and wide sea,*
> *in which there are innumerable teeming things,*
> *Living things both small and great.*
> *There the ships sail about;*
> *And there is that Leviathan*
> *Which you made to play there* (Isaiah 26: 20-21).

When the petrified, red-haired, white-skinned Oscar is crated aboard the *Leviathan,* in England, his friends comfort him, and it becomes apparent that Oscar and the sweat slippery bible that he carries are no more likely to be suited to Australia than the cow that is heaved on board in a harness.

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[71] The attempted removal of Australian Aborigines and their culture.

[72] For some men there is an erotic element in these acts of violence (see Carey 1988, 171).

[73] Carey's *Leviathan* is '690 feet long, 83 feet wide and 58 feet deep'. The Ark, according to him,was '512 feet long, 85 feet wide and 51 feet deep. This coincidence was not lost on Oscar who 'discovered' the *Leviathan* two weeks after his fateful evening at [the tea-house in] Cremorne Garden' (Carey 1988, 191).

> *The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders* (Deuteronomy 3:12, 39).

Oscar makes the journey to Sydney because he has gambled on God: first as a boy when a toss of a stone determines that he should leave his father's Devon home and the Plymouth Brethren; and then, at Oriel, in Oxford, where he has been sent by the evangelical Hugh Stratton to prepare to be a minister, a spun coin determines his future. At Oriel Oscar is introduced to race-track gambling by Wardley-Fish, the son of a Bishop. Cards and coins seem to work in his favour, his winnings contribute to the church poor boxes and cover his minimalist needs. They supply the luxury of coffee to Stratton and his wife, the couple who take him in when the tossed stone tells him that 'this was where God wished him to go' (Jones 1998, 13). Oscar's flipped coin showing Queen Victoria's head, the second symbol of God's desires for him, leads him to travel to Australia to become a missionary (Jones 1998, 50). Just as he is about to sail, Stratton insists on knowing Oscar's gambling system; a system which, sloppily applied, brings about Stratton's financial downfall and his suicide.

Fish knows that Oscar's journey to Sydney will be overwhelmingly difficult. Oscar has a fear of 'agua', a phobia connected with the death of his mother. In an early scene we see Oscar's newly widowed and distraught father, Theophilus,[74] attempting to

[74] The biblical Theophilus is a most respected man; this contributes to the reader's understanding of Oscar's father. The Gospel according to Luke is dedicated to 'most excellent Theophilus' (Luke 1:1-3); and the prologue to The Acts of the Apostles commences: 'The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach' (Acts 1:1).

throw his wife's clothes into the sea. The clothes merge with the seaweed. They tangle around the terrified young Oscar's legs as he walks into the water towards his father. Oscar's phobia deepens when he sees his father bleeding from a cut thigh as he comes out of the sea where he has been collecting specimens. He believes this is the sign from God that he has prayed for, a sign that shows that he has been wrongfully punished for eating a Christmas pudding. For this pagan act Oscar's loving father struck him on the head. Theophilus has also invented a tale that Oscar cannot believe, a tale of witchcraft, falsely conceived from Oscar's hopscotch hieroglyphics, chalked on a rock to divine whether the true will of God rests with 'Father ... Baptists ... Catholics ... Anglicans (Jones 1998, 12). Oscar believes that his father has turned away from truth. When he tests this belief, the stone continually rests on *Alpha* - it is to the Anglicans that 'God wished him to go' (Jones 1998, 13).

Later in the story, Fish enlightens the viewer regarding the strange and passionate character of Oscar's naturalist father. He picks up a copy of *Hennacombe Rambles*, in a bookshop. It is Theophilus's work. Overcome with wonder, Fish is unable to communicate his awe to his fianceé; the book enables him to understand Oscar in 'his home pond'. 'As the old man spoke of his wish that Christ's Kingdom should come in our lifetime' Wardley Fish realised that 'the pond' was never as he had seen it or as Oscar had described it (Carey 1988, 196):

> Wardley Fish had an impression of a killjoy, love-nothing, a man you could not send a present to in case he smelt the racetrack on it, a man who would snatch a little Christmas pudding from a young boy's mouth. But where he might have expected to find a stern and life-denying spirit, he found such a trembling and tender appreciation of hedgerow,

> moss, robin, and the tiniest of sea creatures that even Wardley Fish (it was he who thought the 'even') was impressed and moved (Carey 1988, 196).

Fish learns from the book that the specimens express for Theophilus the exquisite nature of God's world, and that for him theology and naturalism were woven together. He could not separate them. Fish's realises, with his unexpected insights, that Theophilus was completely unaware that his harshness towards alternative religion (his Anglican neighbour) and heathen practices (the eating of a Christmas pudding) could drive his son away.

Oscar leaves all that is dear to him, including his father, to travel across the world to Sydney and then to Bellinger, Northern New South Wales, land of the 'Never Never'. His journey into the outback is the result of his most most dangerous and impetuous gamble. This is filmed in an elegant tea-house where he takes Lucinda to celebrate what for him is a most exhilarating achievement: Lucinda's prototype - 'a kennel for God's angels' (Jones 1998, 95). Overcome with excitement Oscar inspires Lucinda to construct a glass church in her glass factory for her friend, the Reverend Dennis Hasset, whom he wrongly believes Lucinda loves. Hasset has been banished to churchless Bellinger for his unorthodox and heretical thoughts, and, as Lucinda is quick to recognise, because of his association with her. She is a woman suspected by Hasset's superiors of keeping late hours and consorting with gamblers, and she will not deny it. For the love of Lucinda, Oscar pledges the safe transportation of the church to Hasset: 'I am prepared to wager you that I can have the glass church in Boat Harbour by, say, Good Friday' (Jones 1988, 100). The narrator tells us that '[t]he odds were surely stacked against him.

Had it been a horse, rather than a woman's heart, he would never have bet on it, not even for a place' (Jones 1988, 96). 'Oscar's idea was born out of Christianity: that if you sacrifice yourself you will obtain the object of your desires' (Jones 1998, 96). Lucinda swept up with Oscar's enthusiasm - and her delight in Oscar as well as gambling - wagers her inheritance, the inheritance that she has been in a hurry to dispose of. She believes that the money will provide her with the means to guarantee Oscar's safety.

Oscar's wager leads him to what he most fears: contact with water. He had not known, the narrator tells us, that his travel will include traversing six rivers of New South Wales: the Macleay, the Hastings, the Clarence, the Manning, the Hunter and the Namoi (Jones 1998, 111), before reaching the Bellinger River, the 'dreadful river' (Carey 1988, 494). 'Oscar was sick with fear at the thing he had begun' (Jones 1998, 111). Lucinda realises the folly of the gamble, but too late. When she would stop Oscar he is already out of contact and out of his senses, dosed with laudanum by the clerk, Jeffris, the would be surveyor-explorer in charge of Lucinda's expedition, who wishes him out of the way.

Oscar's departure from England is made because he believes that in gambling there is 'something of the divine'. His belief surfaces in one of the strongest and funniest scenes which takes place on board the *Leviathan* when Oscar realises that Lucinda wishes not to confess, as he first supposes, but to gamble. In Lucinda's first-class cabin he makes a remarkably perceptive, yet muddled speech about God and gambling, before collapsing at the sight of the rising seas through the porthole. Near to hysteria, Oscar says:

> Our whole life is a wager. We bet - it is all in Pascal you know - we bet that there is a God. We bet our life on it. We calculate the odds, the return, that we shall sit with the saints in paradise. Our anxiety about our bet will wake us before dawn in a cold sweat. And God sees us suffer. I cannot see that such a God, whose fundamental requirement of us is that we gamble our mortal souls - it is true! We stake everything on the fact of His existence - that such a God can look unkindly on a chap wagering a few quid on the likelihood of a dumb animal crossing the line first, unless - [Oscar shuffles the cards] - unless it might be considered a blasphemy to apply to common pleasure that which is divine [and Oscar holds up a pack of cards] (Jones 1998, 63).

Oscar's journey from Sydney to Boat Harbour with the glass church made in Lucinda's glass factory, has more horrors for him than his terrifying adventure on the *Leviathan*. Not only does he have rivers to cross, he experiences pastures totally outside God's 'path of righteousness' and his own comprehension; a world so different from his known Devon crannies; and things that he has never even dreamed of: the murdering of Aborigines and the unspeakable treatment of man to man, and man to woman. Oscar is an alienated character, an English misfit, too new and odd to fit in with the land, society, the Church, or the men with whom he travels. Towards the end of his journey, pushed beyond his limits of endurance, Oscar reaches the deepest heart of darkness. The 'sins' he commits are made even more serious by his Christian and laudanum-affected imagination.

In a tavern scene, close to the journey's end, Jeffris drinks with cedar cutters and his men whilst jeering at Oscar, 'a padre come to bring God to Bellingen' (Jones 1998, 119). Oscar wonders what God would have him do. He also wonders, '[h]ow could I smite you'. Exhausted and out of control Oscar takes from his pocket the bonus that Lucinda had placed in an envelope to guarantee his

safe-keeping. Jeffris expects the money to be his with the safe arrival of Oscar and the church at Boat Harbour. When Oscar challenges the men in the public house to gamble, with the money bestowed on him, Jeffris responds violently (Jones 1998, 120). Oscar then prays aloud: 'The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies' (Jones 1998, 122).

Oscar, slow to smite, becomes instead the target of Jeffris' sword and boots. He is rescued by his friend, Percy Smith,[75] whose freshly sharpened axe cuts into Jeffris' arm. Oscar then delivers what might have been a *coup-de-grace.* But it is not. The blow he makes to Jeffris's head is made without compassion for a wounded man. In self-defence and with hatred Oscar commits the greatest of Christian sins - murder. 'Oscar knows he is damned' (Jones 1998, 124). Oscar's terrifying and debilitating journey ends with his delivery of the church to Hasset for the Christians of Boat Harbour. He has won the wager, but soon after, he drowns, entombed in the sinking glass church that neither God nor the faulty lighters can keep afloat.[76] Tragically for Oscar, no promised heavenly aid eventuates.[77] He ends his life in despair, when only twenty six years of age, because he strays far from 'the paths of righteousness' that in confusion he struggles to follow. During his long, terrible and arduous journey, Oscar commits sins against the God in whom he trusts (whilst recognising that his trust is a

[75] Smith is the expedition's 'Collector of Animals'; cockatoos and a wallaby are part of his catch. Although mentioned in the film-script they are not seen in the film. Worth noting is the claim that 'no animals were injured in the making of this film' (Jones 1998, 113, 115).

[76] The symbolism of the disappearing church is discussed later in the chapter.

[77] In a series of follies that lead to his death Oscar follows what he believes to be God's instructions. He is like another deluded protagonist, Nathan Price, the Christian minister in Barbara Kingsolver's (1999) novel, *The Poisonwood Bible,* discussed later in the thesis.

gamble); against man, to whom he should administer compassion and 'turn the other cheek'; and against Lucinda whom he loves (by the following 'seduction' of Miriam Chadwick). Only Oscar's unintended death by drowning could release him from the burden of so much guilt.

> *O My God, my God,*
> *why have you forsaken me?*
> *Why are you so far from helping me,*
> *And from the words of my groaning?*
> *Oh my God, I cry in the daytime,*
> *but you do not hear ...* (Psalm 22:1-2)

Prior to his death, exhausted and delirious, and without the laudanum to which he has become addicted, Oscar collapses into the waiting and desiring arms of Miriam. She has come to Hasset's aid when he requests that she 'be the Good Samaritan' and see to Oscar's needs. The meeting of Miriam and Oscar is the circular event that returns us to the beginning of Armstrong's film and the introduction of the narrator, Oscar's great grandson, as he tells the triangular tale of Oscar, Lucinda, and Miriam, his mother.

A Woman's Place

Miriam, the unsuccessful temptress of Hasset and the seducer of Oscar, is determined that she will not lose this one (Jones 1998, 132).[78] She interprets Oscar's needs to her own advantage. He is 'cared for' with a soothing application of lotions and oils, and Oscar has no energy to resist (Jones 1998, 132). 'Dear God' is all that he can say (Jones 1998, 132-133). After this encounter Miriam arranges to wed

[78] In 'Numbers' (12:1-2) Miriam (*rebellion*) complains about Moses' marriage to a Cushite and for this is 'struck down' (*Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, 1947). Miriam is 'struck down' in child-birth after 'complaining about Hasset's recent marriage ... 'he's been properly nabbed now' (Jones 1998, 126).

Oscar and wed him fast, and Oscar believes this is the only thing to do in the circumstances. The narrator tells us: 'Although his whole heart cried out for Lucinda, Oscar believed he would have to marry this woman he had compromised. It did not occur to him that she had compromised him. That he had been 'nabbed' (Jones 1998, 134). He goes to the church to pray for the forgiveness of all his sins:

> Forgive me Almighty God, for the murder of the blacks. Forgive me for the death of Mr. Stratton. Forgive me for the murder of Mr. Jeffris. Forgive me, Almighty God, for the seduction of Mrs. Chadwick. Forgive me my pride, forgive me for my ignorance. Forgive me for betraying Lucinda (Jones 1998, 136).

Totally reduced in energy, Oscar falls asleep as the church breaks from its tetherings and sinks into the river.

Miriam's entrapment of Oscar is both a gamble and an act of desperation. There had been little time, or inclination, for Miriam to discover the qualities in Oscar that had attracted Lucinda. By the end of Oscar's journey there is little apparent appeal in his sunburned, grubby appearance - yet Miriam is undaunted in her desire for a man. A European governess, working without the support of a man or money, would have few means to stand alone in the critical, conformist society of the 1860s, or to support a child. Miriam desperately needs to bind herself to a man, and she believes that sexual intercourse is the sole means left to her. The narrator tells us: 'If Miriam had known of Oscar's wager with Lucinda, she would have moved heaven and earth to claim Lucinda's fortune' (Jones 1998, 140). But Hasset burns the pledge made between Oscar and Lucinda, found with Oscar's simple possessions after his death, and Miriam loses all: Oscar, Lucinda's fortune,

and her life - giving birth to Oscar's child. The narrator also tells us that before his great-grandmother died she had time to see that her baby had the same red hair as her father (Jones 1998, 141).[79] This is the twist in the story that we discover at the end of the film. When Hasset later told Lucinda the baby's history, 'she had only one thought in mind' (Jones 1998, 141). The thought becomes explicit when we see Lucinda swimming with the child - in a *tableau vivant* of joyful mother with child in nature - an environment that is prefigured in an early scene when Lucinda is at home on the farm, bathing in the dam.[80]

Miriam, a title used for Mary Magdalene, may be an allusion to the biblical anointer of oils, but this might seem too generous and obscure an allusion for Oscar's seducer. The more obvious 'Mary Magdalene' (Carey 1988, 487-8) in the film's adaptation of the chapter, is the weeping Aboriginal woman, named Kumbaingiri Mary. She is seen in the tavern (where Oscar kills Jeffris) en route to Bellinger. Mary is only partly screened from Oscar's view while she is being raped by one cedar cutter after another.

Armstrong depicts the harsh circumstances in which Aboriginal women are frequently placed through no fault of their own. Their vulnerability to white males is reported by Henry Reynolds in his

[79] Gillian Beer succintly describes the sequence of events that led to the existence of the narrator in her essay, 'The Reader's Wager: Lots, Sorts, and Futures': 'Oscar is brought to death and yet manages to be the great grandfather of the narrator. Not by Lucinda. Lucinda loses Oscar, the wager, his inheritance. She becomes, we are told, a heroine in the Australian labour movement (Beer 1990, 102). The major difference between the film and the novel is in the last of Beer's lines. In the film Lucinda's life becomes domesticated, not political.

[80] The film shies away from the novel's concluding tale of Lucinda, with sore and reddened hands, working in Mr. Edward Jason's pickle factory before she takes on a political career. In the film Lucinda does not lose everything to the predatory Miriam Chadwick as she does in Carey's novel. She becomes the *de-facto* mother, of Oscar and Miriam's child. The film's happy ending seems contrived for box-office purposes (like the early version of *Blade Runner* (1982) and *The Piano* (1993).

autobiography, *Why weren't we told*?:

> Mates shared Aboriginal women with their fellows - and were expected to do so in a way that would not have happened with white woman, other than prostitutes. Shared sex without affection or responsibility strengthened male bonding, complicity in atrocity, abuse and abduction added greatly to the sense of solidarity. When race was the issue all white men stuck together, boss and worker, bond and free, Protestant and Roman (Reynolds 1999, 32-33).

In his naivety and ignorance of Aboriginal culture, Oscar christens the Kumbaingiri woman, 'Mary Magdalene' in the chapter of that name. He told her that she would live in Paradise. Carey, ironically and metonymically, describes this on the first day that Oscar and 'Jesus first came to the Bellinger' (Carey 1988, 488). But in the paradise of Urunga, New South Wales, Kumbaingiri Mary is a vessel for white man's lust. In Carey's story, instead of 'scapegoating' women and judging them entirely 'bad' (Daly 1985, 60-61) - as is often the case when women perform as prostitutes - the Aboriginal woman becomes a holy woman.

Lucinda's inherited wealth from her *avante garde* mother gives her choices, choices that are certainly not available to Mary - or even the orphaned Miriam. But even such a progressive thinker as Elizabeth, Lucinda's mother, a friend of the famous writer George Eliot (Carey 1988, 202), did not imagine that a woman could live alone or manage a country property. We see Elizabeth only briefly in the film, but, in the novel, we learn that since being in Australia she had only been able to read the Bible and the Book of Common Prayers in four years (Carey 1988, 90). Lucinda had a love for her Australian home that was not shared by her mother.

After her husband's death, Elizabeth thought only of her English 'Home'. She would have left. It was only because of comments about 'pretty heads' and not having to worry, after the death of her husband, that, infuriated, she stayed (Carey 1988, 88). It was because of this love of Home, and her desire for a different future for Lucinda, that Elizabeth decided that the family property at Mitchell Creek should be sold after her death. Lucinda stubbornly resists leaving. She weeps as she observes the fruit trees being chopped down and the first of the surveyor's red pegs being driven into the ground. Lucinda, at home in the country, has been brought up outside the conventions of the society in which she moves. The narrator tells us that 'Elizabeth knew that she had produced a proud square peg in the full knowledge that from coast to coast there were nothing but round holes' (Jones 1988, 18).

Unlike her female friends, Lucinda's mother had previously combined her literary preoccupations with her unusual interest in factories. Women in those days could work in factories, but it is Oscar who receives a welcome in Lucinda's factory, not her, much to Lucinda's pique (Jones 1998, 94). The men are disturbed by her presence: 'They are poor ignorant lads, and easily distracted by a lady' (Carey 1988, 329). Her manager thinks it better that she does not visit. A female proprietor is not an acceptable notion in Victorian England any more than it is acceptable for Hasset, a clergyman, to be associated with a woman who wears bloomers; or for Mrs. Stratton, the wife of Oscar's mentor at Oxford, to become a don, even though she was temperamentally well suited for study. The constitution of the university could on no account matriculate a woman, even though, Carey informs us, it would admit 'a fourteen

year old boy - with his pocket full of string and dried out worms' (1988, 45).

Lucinda is leashed in everywhere by these conventions. 'It was the condition of her adult life to feel it. She refused the conventions of whalebone and elastic, but still she was squeezed and blistered, pinched and hobbled' (Carey 1988, 251). Lucinda's struggle - like that of the women's movement - entails much suffering, confusion, and tragedy, including her unconsumated love for Oscar. It is when Lucinda's life becomes connected with Oscar's that she becomes excessively vulnerable. Not because religion plays such a strong role in her life, but she, like Oscar, is a gambler, and Oscar's perceptions of God affect every move and gamble that he makes.

After the triple loss of her parents and her beloved country birthplace, and the removal of her only real friend in Sydney, Hasset, Lucinda was lonely. Her return to Sydney with her glass making equipment, at the beginning of the film, was with ideas that she wished to share with him. When Hasset rejects her offer to join her in the management of her factory it is a major blow. Yet there is a strength in Lucinda's character that Armstrong depicts, her ability to survive when women as well as men turn against her, and others seek to profit from their relationship - Jeffris, and her card-playing friends, for instance. Jeffris's ambitions and inadequacies are not obvious to Lucinda at first because, as Carey writes, '[she] was too much in love [with Oscar] to think how masculine hierachies are created' (1988, 436).

On Christmas Day Lucinda suffers harsh and unexpected consequences from the judgements of the Church. In a sermon to the Balmain (Sydney) congregation, the minister overtly condemns her relationship with Oscar. This brings about the loss of their housekeeper, alienation from their community, and the misplaced trust in Jeffris that helps to bring about Oscar's journey and his death. All this Lucinda overcomes. After the loss of Oscar, and much suffering, she makes decisions that bring joy to her life - but here the story extends beyond the peripheries of the film. Armstrong's portrayal of Lucinda's surrogate motherhood, and her survival as an enriched single woman, signify that she is no longer suffering from the restraints that society and fashion would impose upon her. Lucinda survives; more than this, she flourishes.

A Disappearing Church

Lucinda's and Oscar's lives straddle the cusp of change: not only the conceptions that Darwin's scientific work on the evolution of species triggered, affecting both science and religion,[81] but also the changes brought about by the women's movement. Oscar's confused character reflects not only biblical ambiguity but also the doubts and divisions of the Victorian times that began during his lifetime (1841-1866). The 'Literalists' and the 'Lateralists', as Carey calls them, are in conflict. Christian stories are being newly questioned.[82] According to historian Roger C. Thompson, by the

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[81] In 1859 Darwin's masterpiece, entitled *On The Origin of Species* was published. That book caused most of the remaining principles by which human life was understood in religious terms to go up in smoke (Spong 1998, 36).

[82] The most noted event being Thomas Huxley's 'outfoxing of Bishop Wilberforce during a debate on Darwin's theory in Oxford on Saturday 30 June 1860 ...' (Nicholas 1989, 140). Hasset's disagreements with his Bishop are related to Hasset's disbelief in the Virgin birth, the resurrection, and his acceptance of Darwin's theories.

1880s, Christian churches in Australia were facing wider challenges than attacks on them by secularists:

> The Darwinist theory of evolution had become a major challenge to the evangelical faith that was held by most Anglicans and Protestants. Biblical criticism also was testing fundamentalist views of the Bible. While many people shrugged off the new ideas, they were producing doubts and divisions among some, especially educated people. Also the resistance of many evangelicals to new environmental and liberal ideas were fuelling the arguments of the secularists (Thompson 1994, 24).[83]

God's creation of a wondrous world brought about by Him in six days is in doubt. The Church is slowly becoming weakened from the 'Genesis' of its foundations. Faith is losing ground to scientific knowledge and ideas about the evolution of species:

> The ['Genesis'] myth suggested that the man and woman were made on the final day of God's busy first week. God finished the perfect creation with this majestic act and proceeded to take the divine rest on the seventh day, thus creating the Sabbath. In the common mind so obviously true were these tales that few people in the believing age conceived of any other possibility - few people, that is, until the writings of Charles Darwin appeared (Spong 1998, 36).

But there is nothing to replace religion. This is what is symbolised in the film as Lucinda's resurrected church, bereft of the glass that sparkled in the sun during its journey up the Bellinger River, is finally transported to be used as a Sunday school at Bellingen. Carey tells us in the novel that all that remains are the thistles that have colonised the ground (1988, 508).

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[83] Darwin wrote in his journal of his own God-related confusions thirty years before Oscar died. In 1836 Darwin visited Sydney on HMS Beagle and made a journey to Bathurst where he observed platypus and reflected on the strange character of the animals of this country as compared with the rest of the world. He wrote: 'An unbeliever in every thing beyond his own reason might exclaim, "Two distinct Creators must have been at work; their object, however has been the same, and certainly the end in each case is complete"'. After his observation of other small creatures Darwin continued: There can be no doubt that this predacious larva belongs to the same genus with the European kind, though to a different species. Now what would the sceptic say to this? Would any two workmen ever have hit upon so beautiful, so simple, and yet so artificial a contrivance? It cannot be so; one Hand has surely worked throughout the universe (Darwin 1964, 235).

About a hundred and fifty years after Darwin wrote his important work on evolution Bishop John Shelby Spong, wrote about a disappearing Church:

> There are the signs even in the midst of the present religious world that a new consciousness is being born and a new concept of God is evolving. Surely the evidence points to one conclusion: the driving force behind all these changes is the dawning recognition that the theistic God of the past is dying, and with that death, the way humans relate in worship to that supernatural, invasive, transcendent deity is collapsing ... If there is no other purpose for the Church than to point people to the external God above, then churches will finally disappear from our landscapes (Spong 1998, 183).

The Glass Church

The fragility of the Christian church - and its strength - is symbolised by Lucinda's glass church, and a glass drop, the Prince Rupert Drop. In an early scene Hasset, Lucinda's advisor on the properties of glass, wishes to demonstrate, as her parents did, that the Drop is strong enough to resist the impact of a hammer and fragile enough to shatter into minute fragments when nipped by pliers. When a child, Lucinda received such a Prince Rupert Drop. It was delivered to her in a box like a jewel, she treasured it. Lucinda cannot bear to allow Hasset to repeat her parents' experiment. The Drop is a paradoxical icon of strength and fragility combined, 'just the stuff to build a life on', says the narrator early in the film. Contrary to the narrator's comment, glass is *not* the stuff to build a life on. It is the material of delusion. In the 'sap-heavy' boxes carried on the expedition there was nothing that equated with the 'crystal-pure, bat-winged structure' of Lucinda's dreams. Instead there was a 'lead-heavy folly, thirty hundred weight of

cast-iron rods, five hundred and sixty-two glass sheets weighing two pounds each, twenty gross of nuts and bolts, sixty pound of putty, five gallons of linseed oil' (Carey 1988, 444).

We learn about characters in *Oscar and Lucinda* by their relationship to glass and the glass church. Glass is a touchstone (Abrams 1981, 201). Oscar is so enchanted, both by Lucinda and the many properties of glass that, when he is perceptive enough to understand the madness of their undertaking, he ignores what he suspects to be true: 'that the glass church was just the devil's trick ... it would be too hot. The congregation would curse Christ's name' (Carey 1988, 430). He is no more able to resist being caught up in Lucinda's enthusiasm than she is able to resist his. Oscar's desperate dedication to a journey he dreads shows his absolute commitment to Lucinda. Lucinda who, very quickly also develops doubts about the project of building a glass church, is as captivated and ensnared as Oscar when she sees his joy in glass, her prototype, and the glassworks.

Other characters evaluated by their association with the glass church are Lucinda's gambling friends, Mr. d'Abbs and Mr. Jeffris. D'abbs (whose structural sketches so appal Lucinda) is, as his name implies, a dabbler. Like his drawings of the glass church, he is all rococco and show, of no substance or useful knowledge. He is a flitter, described, theriomorphically,[84] as a 'honeyeater amidst raging lantana' (Carey 1988, 158). Jeffris sees himself as a hero of an expedition, adventuring into the wilderness, with fame and a flourishing future for himself. He epitomises the delusion of the

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[84] See Jhan Hochman's 'Theriomorphs and Anthropomorphs' for a discussion on humans as creatures and the bestiaries in *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Women in Love* (1998, 21-70).

enterprise to transport the church.

Hasset is another character who can be assessed by his shallow relationship with glass. He is piqued when Lucinda prevents him from demonstrating one of his most successful acts: the fracturing of the Prince Rupert Drop. Hasset does not wish to be judged faulty in his taste by his friends and religious superiors. Carey writes that he 'could not bear to walk down the street and be thought a merchant or a manufacturer' (1988, 285). He is too weak and snobbish a man to fully commit himself to Lucinda. When Hasset watches the 'miracle' of the church arriving on the Bellinger River - a gift that he knows can only be from Lucinda - he is concerned only with the itching on his foot caused by a leech, and what his newly-wedded wife will think (Carey 1988, 497-8).

In the novel, the Narcoo Aborigines got the idea that the boxes on the wagon were related to stories. 'They thought they were sacred. They thought they were the white man's dreaming' (Carey 1988, 469) They saw glass for the first time when there was an accident and they looked inside the boxes (Carey 1988, 469). After the massacre of Aborigines by Jeffris and his party, an Elder, Odalberee, cuts himself with glass because of the tragedy, and dies. The shards are taken away where they cannot be found to remove all traces of the white man's magic (Carey 1988, 470). The Aborigines sing their memories that glass cuts. 'Cuts trees. Cuts the skin of the tribes' (Carey 1988, 469).

When Kumbaingiri Mary saw the glass church assembled for its journey up the Bellinger - two days before Palm Sunday - she

became a Christian. 'She had only seen glass in booze bottle until that day. She saw glass could be good' (Carey 1988, 488). The Kumbaingiri Aborigines who later see the many windows of the church glittering in sunlight on the river think it is some kind of white man's dreaming.

Carey also tells us that the glass church has meaning for the ancient insects that are trapped within:

> There were bush-flies inside the church. They did not understand [what] glass was. There were also three blue-bellied dragon-flies. For one hundred thousand years their progenitors had inhabited that valley without once encountering glass. Suddenly the air was hard where it should have been soft. Likewise the tawny hard-shelled water beetle and the hang-legged wasp. They flew against the glass in panic. They had the wrong intelligence to grasp the nature of glass. They bashed against 'nothing' as if they were created only to demonstrate to Oscar Hopkins the limitations of his own understanding, his ignorance of God, and that the walls of hell itself might be made of something like this, unimaginable, contradictory, impossible (Carey 1988, 494).

The glass church is a symbol of culture in nature and a fragile and failing Church: it slowly fractures and dips on its faulty lighters, before sinking into the ancient Bellinger, with Oscar, a defrocked minister, trapped within.

A Different Sense of Place: Not A Christian Landscape At All

> *For you [God] made [man] a little lower than the angels,*
> *And you have crowned him with glory and honour.*
> *You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands;*
> *You have put all things under his feet,*
> *All sheep and oxen -*
> *Even the beasts of the field.*
> *the birds of the air,*
> *and the fish of the sea*
> *That pass through the paths of the seas* (Psalm 8).

'God made all the landscape' (Carey 1988, 162) says one of Lucinda's

gambling associates. But Lucinda knew what was meant, as she did when the comment is made that the land is not a Christian landscape. She had known something of the blacks. She had seen them 'standing as still as trees' in the back of her mother's farm at Mitchell's Creek, the year that they had been defeated at Parramatta, when she was only sixteen (Carey 1988, 162). 'The back creek contained a richer, tangled growth of old gnarled trees where you could see the scars the blacks had made cutting barks for canoes and other implements. ... It was Blackfellow territory' (Carey 1988, 79). Lucinda had felt the unchristian landscape in the still shadows along the watercourses when she:

> ran across the flat green pasture with plovers shrieking above her, ran out into the sunlight where the yellow sap-bright fence posts, peeled of slippery bark, with round shiny backs and rough straight sides, were lying in a higgledy-piggledy pile on a bed of stringy bruised bark.' She knew what was meant ... She felt ghosts here, but not Christian ghosts, not John the Baptist or Jesus of Galilee. There were other spirits, other stories, slippery as shadows (Carey 1988, 162-3).

Oscar, travelling with his 'sweat-slippery bible' is unaware of the stories that are part of the land, and too drugged with the laudanum with which he has unwillingly been dosed by Jeffris as an antidote to the terrifying '*agua*':

> He saw nothing. The country was thick with sacred stories more ancient than the ones he carried in his sweat-slippery Bible. He did not even imagine their presence. Some of these stories were as small as the transparent anthropoids that lived in the puddles beneath the river casuarinas. These stories were like fleas, thrip, so tiny that they might inhabit a place (inside the ears of the seeds of grass) he would later walk across without even seeing. In this landscape every rock had a name, and most names had spirits, ghosts, meanings (Carey 1988, 492).

As Oscar journeys into the 'bush' and across the many rivers of New South Wales, the landscape begins to dominate the scenes as

high camera filming ('helicopter takes') emphasises Oscar's and the other travellers' alienation from the land. Sydney had been no better for Oscar:

> The stories of the gospel lay across the harsh landscape like sheets of newspaper on a polished floor. They slid, slipped, did not connect with anything beneath them. It was a place without moss or lichen (Carey 1988, 307).

The place made Oscar 'squint', and he had found the people in his flock like the landscape, 'all harsh edges like facets of convict-broken rock' (Carey 1988, 307). He is a man homesick for hedges (Carey 1988, 327) at home in hutches and burrows, who even in Ilfracombe, his Devon home, rarely ventured beyond the village paths. In Devon, Oscar and his father stood out like two London bricks.

Australia is seen through Oscar's immigrant eyes. It is no Edenic paradise but a misunderstood place of leeches, spiders and snakes, blowflies, waterlogged earthworms and bull-ants. Birds are 'savage' and the Bellinger appears to be a 'dreadful' river (Carey 1988, 90,93,307,492,495). In the scene of Oscar's drowning 'large and frightened ancient insects' are trapped in the church; the novel's narrator describing the doomed dragon-flies as 'exquisite' and 'jewel-blue' and their 'one hundred thousand year ancestry' (Carey 1988, 494), expresses sympathy and aesthetic appreciation for such creatures and the land. He describes the land as suffering land, Bellingen Heads, known as Urunga, is 'a wounded place' (Carey 1988, 471), and Bellinger a 'bleeding landscape':

> The Bellinger was not like it is now, with wide electric-green fields pushing down on the river. The banks were like green cliffs of camouflage pierced with giant knitting needles and spun and tangled about with ferns and creepers. It was a landscape already bleeding

from the stabbing and hacking of the cedar cutters, but the wounds were all internal, in the belly of the bush (Carey 1988, 492).[85]

Even alienated and myopic Oscar begins to comprehend and *feel* the oppressed land. When Jeffris, exuberantly content with himself and his exploration, rides up to ask how life goes in the 'Ladies Compartment', Oscar ignores him. Jeffris insists: 'What do you say to this, the countryside?' Oscar replies: 'If it were my country sir, I would be feared to see you coming' (Jones 1998, 115).

Armstrong's direction emphasises the hugeness and strength of the country and the waters that run through it. Literally outstanding are the red-clad military styled men led by Jeffris, costumed for war against Aborigines and unknown territories. Yet Jeffris and his caravan appear toy-like and ridiculous when seen from above, transporting the glass church by land and river. They are minimised as the camera sweeps over their heads to encompass the powerful landscapes, the brilliance of their red garments, blood-bright like a fresh wound, contrasting with the green hills of the country through which they travel. The rivers, the sea, and the land are important visual components of the text and textures of Armstrong's film. Her frequent use of long shots establishes both the immensity of Australian country and the alienation of objects, characters and places: Oscar's father in the Dévonshire sea when first seen from the young Oscar's perspective; the glass church on the river as if viewed by Aborigines high above in the hills; and again the church, seen on the river by

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[85] 'The red cedar (*Cedrela australis*) is a large tree that ranks as the only member of its widely spread genus indigenous to Australia. A valuable timber tree, it was much exploited on the east coast, from New South Wales to Queensland, between the 1820s and 1850s, and is now relatively rare' (Ramsay 1964, 51).

Miriam, across the paddocks from the house where she is governess. Lucinda appears small and lonely as she travels on the river steamer to Boat Harbour and when we see her amidst graves and a group of black-clad mourners in the deserted countryside at Oscar's funeral.

Characters' insensitivity to their environments is demonstrated during Oscar and Lucinda's journey on the *Leviathan.* They are told by passengers of marvels that everyone should see: sea blubbers, the *entomastraca* with which Oscar is familiar. Fearful of the sea he deserts Lucinda and the company of viewers going on deck to see the creatures' wonderful phosphorescence. The ship's engineer is encouraged by the passengers to show his power over nature with a demonstration of a little acid in a bucket:

> The bright points in the bucket grew bright, some white, some yellow, but all intense, like tiny stars suddenly blooming in the heavens. They then flickered, faded, died (Carey 1988, 253).

After this exquisite description in the novel of the dying *entomastraca,* Lucinda voices her contempt of the engineer's demonstration: 'You dull man. You would murder God through the dullness of your imagination' (Carey 1988, 253). This scene is excluded from the film, such tiny phosphorescent creatures are not within its intended scope. The cinematography in *Oscar and Lucinda* engages with people and bold landscapes more than with the intimacies of nature. In Armstrong's film, stories of Aborigines are also shadowed into the background like the disappearing shadows of men that Lucinda saw at the back creek when she was a young woman (Carey 1988, 79).[86]

Flash-backs and narration are devices used in the film so that Oscar and Lucinda's great grandson can tell his own story as well as the love story of Oscar and Lucinda; but he also tells us that his stories are constructed with subtle linings understood more easily by women:

> My mother ... understood as women often do more easily than men, that the declared meaning of a spoken sentence is only its overcoat, and the real meaning lies underneath its scarves and buttons' (Carey 1988, 190).

Early in the novel the narrator tells the reader about the leaders of the Gleniffer community - ten miles away from the town of Bellingen - and their use of the cliffs of Darkwood to dispose of the dark inhabitants. Oscar's great-grandson had learned long ago to distrust local history:

> Darkwood for instance, they will tell you at the Historical Society, is called Darkwood because of the darkness of the foliage, but it was not so long ago you could hear people call it Darkies' Point, and not so long before that when Horace Clarke's grandfather went up there with his mates - all the old families should record this when they are arguing about who controls this shire - and pushed an entire tribe of Aboriginal men and women and children off the edge (Carey 1988, 2).

The fictional accounts of the cruelties of colonialism, in the novel and the film, remind us of a history that many - like the old families of Darkwood - might prefer to forget. This amnesia is challenged by postcolonialism. As Leela Gandhi writes:

> If *postcoloniality* can be described as a condition troubled by the

[86] Kumbaingiri characters are filmed in the bush before being shot by Jeffris and his men. Disappointingly, the language we hear is English, and the possibility of giving more depth to Aboriginal characters is lost.

> consequences of a self-willed historical amnesia, then the theoretical value of *postcolonialism* inheres, in part, in its ability to elaborate the forgotten memories of this condition. In other words, the colonial aftermath calls for an ameliorative remembering and recalling the colonial past (1998, 7-8).

Stories and songs are part of the remembering of a colonialist past. The Narcoo Aborigines, characters in Carey's novel who have never seen white men before, think that they are seeing dead men. They make a song when they see the men come out of the clouds of Mount Darling. They got the idea that the boxes carrying glass were related to stories (Carey 1988, 469). The Aborigines cannot understand what the men are doing, ringbarking and chopping down trees:

> *Where are the bees which grew on these plains?*
> *The spirits have removed them.*
> *They are angry with us.*
> *They leave us without firewood when they are angry.*
> *They'll never grow again.*
> *We pine for the top of our woods, but the dark spirit won't send them back.*
> *The spirit is angry with us* (Carey 1988, 468).

The scene of the battle between confused Aborigines and Jeffris' party only suggests the historical horrors done to Aboriginal tribes, including the Narcoo and Kumbaingiri of New South Wales. The novel informs the reader that there is a past of ignorance and cruelty in this southern continent that is represented in the shadow of Darkwood; a past that is even grimmer than the ignorance and cruelty seen by Oscar. Both the film and the novel imply that the Church, in the mid-eighties, was unconcerned, or unaware of Aboriginal tales, or the sacredness of Aborigines' relationship to their land. We are told in the novel that the Aborigines who remain confuse their stories with the Christian stories told by the colonisers

and the Jesus stories told by Oscar. The stories of Jesus that Oscar brings to New South Wales are compassionate stories, but they are not needed to replace Aboriginal stories, they are as out of place as the Church and its ministers. Oscar loses his life and the woman he loves because he lives with a passionate, yet shaky, faith in irrelevant and out-of-date stories; stories that do not provide the necessary wisdom, comfort, or guidance he needs in Australia.

In self-agrandisement and in emulation of his hero, the explorer Major Thomas Mitchell, Jeffris writes his own stories, manly and heroic stories, to do with the courageous conquering of lands and savage Aborigines. He copies excerpts from Mitchell's *Memoirs*: 'Study the writings of great men. I would place Caesar's Gallic Wars at the top of any list,' he writes (Carey 1988, 404). Jeffris is depicted travelling like a military man, wiping out and controlling anything that could impede his progress. Mitchell, unlike Jeffris, had an appreciation of Aborigines and of their of co-operation with 'whites'. He wrote in his journal: ... 'tracking stray animals and keeping on distinct paths they display a degree of perseverance that is really wonderful' (cited in Reynolds 1999, 233).

All of Jeffris' adult life had been spent in preparation for the day when he should survey unmapped country, have a journal, publish a map' (Carey 1988, 403). Yet Jeffris is a dominator of land and women, as ecofeminists would note. To assert his masculinity, and to teach Lucinda a lesson, he would like to get Lucinda 'on her back' to *subdue* her; but Jeffris would neither recognise this allusion to 'Genesis' nor write this part of his story in his ambitious journal.

The novel's narrator, become omniscient and all-knowing, tells the reader of these thoughts; and that a week before Christmas Jeffris got on his knees and 'asked God that he might be granted this Great Journey' (Carey 1988, 405).

Lucinda's radical and, paradoxically, conservative, friend Hasset, did not agree with some of the biblical stories. He preferred the views of Darwin:

> [Hasset] held the Virgin birth to be unproved and inconsistent with the perfect humanity of Christ. He rejected the miracles of the Old Testament. He doubted many of the miracles of the new. He rejected the doctrine of verbal inspiration. He did not think there was sufficient evidence to prove the theory of the resurrection of Christ. He accepted Darwin's theory of evolution, not merely as it applied to insects and animals (at which point Bishop Dancer drew the line) but also as it applied to humankind. He described his position as Broad Church (Carey 1988, 276).

Bishop Dancer, so the story goes, would like to do Hasset over for heresy (Carey 1988, 276-7). Instead Hasset is banished to Boat Harbour 'in the Parish of Never Never', the territory of the Kumbaingiri Tribe, to replace a drowned minister who was thrown in the river by cedar cutters. 'Boat Harbour was filled with foul-mouthed sawyers, ex-convicts to a man, and was, as far as Bishop Dancer could gather, a little hell on earth', but Hasset chooses banishment rather than commit himself to Lucinda and her glass factory.

The most condemning story of Oscar and Lucinda's discovery at Oscar's Randwick ministry is reported in the *Sydney Mail* (Carey 1988, 327). It describes Lucinda as the 'lady' who had been involved with the Reverend Mr. Hopkins in a gambling scandle; but this

news would be slow to reach the exiled Hasset at Boat Harbour, if at all. It does, however, reach the Reverend Mr. Dight and his congregation at Balmain. Lucinda had not seen Oscar since being caught out by his landlord and lady in a game of chance. She resumes her friendship with the 'down and out' finger chewing exile, at Longnose Point, Balmain. They live together, innocently, unchaperoned, and enjoying even the floor scrubbing that they share. But because of gossip and the spreading of stories related to the *Sydney Mail* scandle, the housekeeper leaves Lucinda's home. The Christian community also turns against them as a consequence of Dight's condemnation of Oscar and Lucinda in church. Instead of the Good News he had planned, he quoted Mathew 5: 27-30:'

> You have heard that it was said to those of old,
> You shall not commit adultery.
> But I say to you that whosoever looks at a woman
> to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart.

The two 'sat rigid in their pew'. Dight imagined that Oscar and Lucinda were 'fornicators', 'their red necks advertising guilt' (Carey 1988, 406-7). And this on Christmas day, a day which began with Oscar and Lucinda's delight in the warm air, their home, land and each other. This day - which celebrates one the most famous stories of the Western world, the Christian nativity story, a story of charity, devotion and fulfillment - becomes a day that Oscar and Lucinda would like to forget. The events of Christmas Day are, ironically, catalysts of tragedy for Oscar: they lead him to Jeffris, to his journey into the outback; and to his death in a church - another of the film's ironies. Instead of a haven, the church becomes Oscar's coffin.

The novel's narrator says that when he was a boy all his family believed in the Christian stories; the miracles of the Virgin Birth, the sharing of the loaves and fishes, the story that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and that God sent the plagues of frogs, lice and murrain, and turned Aaron's rod into a serpent. 'We had none of the doubts of the 1860s. At Christmas we made a star of Bethlehem from cardboard and silver paper' (Carey 1988, 75).[87]

Barbara Kingsolver, like Carey, recognises the colonialising effects of biblical stories, and structures her novel, *The Poisonwood Bible*, with biblical quotations that start with 'Genesis' (Kingsolver 1999). Both Oscar and Nathan Price, Kingsolver's non-heroic protagonist, bring their religious beliefs and their Bibles to other countries (Australia and Africa), without seeing or hearing the stories that surround and long precede their own. Their Christian delusions lead them astray, but Nathan has arrogance and cruelty that Oscar does not share. Kingsolver undermines the power of biblical interpretations when Price's rebellious daughter, recalls her pleasure in collecting books famous for their misprints, particularly the Bible:

> I've never actually seen any of these in original editions, but back in the days when print was scarce, only one printing of the Bible was widespread at any given time, and people knew it by heart. Its mistakes became celebrated. In 1823 when the Old Testament appeared with the verse "And Rebekah arose with her *camels*" - instead of *damsels* - it was known as the Camel's Bible. In 1804, the Lions (sic) Bible had sons coming forth from lions instead of loins, and in the Murderers' Bible of 1801, the complainers in Jude 16 did not murmur, they murdered. In the Standing Fishes Bible, the fishermen must have loóked on in such surprise when "the fish stood on the shore all the way from

[87] Bill McKibben writes that when interpreting these stories the Church needs to take a more inclusive and democratic approach to the world's species than 'Genesis' provides (1990, 68-73).

> Engedi to Eneglaim." There are dozens of these: the Treacle Bible, the Bear Bible, the Bug Bible, the Vinegar Bible. In the Sin-On Bible, John 5:14 exhorted the believers not to "sin no more," but to "sin on more!" (Kingsolver 1999, 533).

Kingsolver, like Carey,[88] demonstrates with humour that stories, even biblical stories, are subject to error, failure of memory, faulty editing, and extraordinary faults. There are also ministers of the Christian Church who recognise that there can be flaws in biblical stories, and that they are not the word of God, but are written by different men, in different times and varying political contexts.

Replacing the Thistles

> There are thistles everywhere after the removal of the church, but, there are no stories about thistles (Carey 1988, 508).

The slowly disappearing church, seen at the beginning of the film as the narrator commences his story, symbolises the weakening Christian church. St. John's, resurrected from the Bellinger River, is carted away, 'after only one hundred and twenty years; this church in which [the narrator's] mother sang 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. The narrator distances himself from the holy toned recitations of his mother - who likes to entertain Bishops, and would not mention that Oscar's dog-collar was an act of rebellion - he says:

> ... there is no sign now of anything the church meant to us: Palm Sundays, resurrections, water into wine, loaves and fishes, all those cruel and lofty ideas that Oscar, gaunt sunburnt, his eyes rimmed with white, brought up the river in 1866 (Carey 1988, 508).

Carey's metaphoric thistles, left after the church has been removed, are his reminder of Australia's needs: as well as the necessity to

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[88] Denys Arcand is similarly subversive in *Jesus of Montreal* (1989).

heal and tend the earth, in ways that recognise the particular needs of Australia's ancient soil and species, there are spiritual needs. Thistles are barren symbols, like biblical stories they are European trans-plants, unsuitable for the support of the endemic species, and neglected land.[89]

> If my land cries out against me,
> And its furrows weep together;
> If I have eaten its fruit without money,
> Or caused its owners to lose their lives;
> Then let thistles grow instead of wheat,
> and weeds instead of barley (Job 32:38-40)

Bishop Spong addresses his book, *Why Christianity must Change or Die* (1998), to Christian 'exiles' who challenge religious fundamentalism and who see that there is a need for re-vision in the Church, and that membership is declining because of this need. Spong, an Anglican bishop, and Father Paul Collins, a Roman Catholic priest, both recognise the resistance of the Church to act against ecological crisis. They believe that the Church will die unless it *does* bring about change. Collins, critical of the Church's fundamentalist adherence to out of date stories interprets 'Genesis':1:26-28' as a 'Genesis of Disaster' with his addition of three words to this quotation:

> Then God said, *"Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominium."* So God created humankind in his image ... God blessed them and God said to them, *"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominium* ... 'And they did (cited in Finch 1999, 19).

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[89] The thealogian, Anne Primavesi, writes that in biblical society men do the naming, the ordering, the ploughing, the sowing, the sweaty labour of breaking new ground, as well as 'the weeding out of thorns and thistles'. She reverses biblical sequence in *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity*, where she writes: '*Together* we may find a deeper awareness of the mystery of our sustenance through the earth's fertility, a mystery re-presented to us by the imperatives of ecological community (Primavesi 1991, 266).

Collins believes that fundamentalist religion is about addiction - not like Oscar's risky addiction, or addiction to risk - but an addiction to security and a culture utterly addicted to growth. The people who coherently question this addiction, Collins writes, are the ecologists. This, he says, 'is because ecology is a coming-together of a number of disciplines. Your ethics are built on your religious views in a way. Your ethics spring from your values'. Although Collins says that modern ecology is subversive and that it challenges much of our religious underpinnings, he envisages a coming together of religion and science (cited in Finch 1999, 19).

Conclusion

Much of the strength of Armstrong's *Oscar and Lucinda* is in the depiction of European colonialisation of Australia: the subdividing of land for profit; the hewing into land to make it more like 'Home';[90] and the subsuming of Aboriginal culture by Christian culture. Layers of story in the film undercut patriarchal, heroic, anti-woman and anti-ecology myths, including biblical myths. These are the myths that sustain the dominant members of communities, including Bishop Dancer, Reverend Dight, and others who condemn Oscar and Lucinda for their sins. They are the men who believe that 'white' Christian man is closest to God and that all others are inferior - including the deviant Oscar.

Although Oscar *is* Christian, and is very white, he is a *non*-heroic character who stumbles into alien territories because he gambles on God. Oscar's folly is very explicit: to gamble on God can lead

[90] Henry Reynolds' (1999) rewriting of history exposes the deliberate amnesia of which Europeans generally, and the Christian Church specifically, have been culpable.

us *not* in the paths of righteousness, but *astray*. Oscar bets his life on God, and loses; whereas, in the film, Lucinda loses Oscar, gains his child, and keeps her inheritance. In spite of many obstructions to her womanly desires, she flourishes. The film ends in a traditional romantic-comic mode, in which all ends well for Lucinda. Armstrong's contrived union of a single mother with a child is, however, a more unusual romantic ending than the traditional filmic celebrationary conclusions of a wedding, or the birth of a child to a happily wedded couple. Her depiction of a joyful *de-facto* mother is preferable to many filmic finales in which women do not flourish or even survive.

Implicit in *Oscar and Lucinda* is a critique of patriarchal institutions and monotheistic religion. The film goes against the *status quo* of Western culture by reminding us of the influences of biblical stories, some of them quite bizarre, and the tragedies that colonialism and hierarchies can bring. Whether we visualise nature as a metaphor for God, or God as a metaphor for nature, or, better still, invent new metaphors exclusive of gods and goddesses, it is important that our stories reflect place and nature in all its wonder, diversity and seasons. An inclusive spirituality is needed so that we can relate to the 'exquisite jewel-blue dragon-flies' that Carey describes (1988, 494). However, the under-stories that became apparent to me after several viewings of the film and rereadings of the film-script and novel, are not usually commented on by viewers and critics. Although the scenic beauty of the film is well noted, reviews indicate, as Armstrong would expect, that mainstream viewers are interested in the love-story, and the 'dangerous and obsessive' gambles of Oscar and Lucinda (Brogan

WWW 2000), rather than the stories that lie beneath the 'scarves and buttons' of a Victorian love story. Similarly, as the next chapter indicates, most film reviewers respond to Jane Campion's dangerous love story of a heroine who dares to be different, rather than her exploration of colonialism and the relationship of women and nature which, from an ecocritical perspective, are the strengths of *The Piano*.

Chapter Four

The Piano and the Tragedy of Possession

> *Let a woman learn in silence with all subjection.*
> *And I permit not a woman to teach, or to have authority over the man, but to be in silence.*
> *For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*
> *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression* (1 Timothy 2:11-15).

One of the many strengths of the film, *The Piano* (1993),[91] scripted and directed by Jane Campion, is its subversiveness: Campion's mute[92] protagonist, Ada McGrath, exhibits strength and passion in a way that, even today, challenges vestigial Victorian conceptions of what is desirable behaviour for women in their relationships with men. Not only does the film remind us of the history of violence that is regularly reported via our news media - men's violence against women - but it also reveals parallel violence against wild nature. It is the *wild,* in women and nature, that patriarchy habitually endeavours to possess and domesticate. It is the *wild* that Campion celebrates through the theme of a female journey.

Theories regarding the reported backlash to the film are many (Ashley&Duffy 1996, 69-70, Warner, 1994, 406, Miles 1996, 153, Cleary, 1999; Campion and Coombs 1999, viii).[93] As Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmel write in the preface to their anthology, *Piano Lessons,*'[94] critics and

[91] An Australian (Jan Chapman) production, filmed in New Zealand, financed by France.

[92] According to Marina Warner 'in fairy tales the muteness of protagonists exists in relation to the circumstances in which they are told; there is always a meaning, a lesson' (Warner, 1994, 405).

movie-goers adored it and deplored it' (1999, vii). Perhaps anything that goes against the *status quo* of acceptable sexual behaviour, as Campion's film does, can expect a such a reaction; as well as the 'murmuring from men' put off by aspects of the film that might be called feminine; and what they saw as 'the pathetic nature' of both male leads in the film' (Hay and Duffy 1996, 69). Stanley Kauffman was exceptionally derisive:

> Every moment is upholstered with suffocating high-mindedness that declines to connect symbols with comprehensible themes. I haven't seen a sillier film about a woman and a piano since John Huston's *The Unforgiven* (1960), a Western in which Lillian Gish had her piano carried out into the front yard so she could play Mozart to pacify attacking Indians (cited in Miles 1996, 153).[95]

Another respected reviewer, Anthony Lane, reviewing the film for the *New Yorker*, was more positive than Kauffman in his response:

> So clever and water-tight a film may well be forbidding, but it also picks you up and moves you, and the performers breathe it full of life. Jane Campion peels back the past and finds it shockingly alive, in no need of resuscitation (cited in Miles 1996, 153).

When John Cleary interviewed Jane Campion about her latest film, *Holy Smoke*, for Radio National, he said, 'many people found *The Piano* quite confronting ... I'm sure *Holy Smoke* will provoke much the same reaction' (Cleary 1999). Campion responded:

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[93] Campion and Coombs write: 'Perhaps it is the contemporary mix of genres and narrative deviations that causes all the fuss about the film. The audience has expectations of the genre they engage with and *The Piano* clearly falls into several categories. It is a romance, it is historically placed, and it has a great deal of cultural significance. The style of the film indicates both a historical romance and a contemporary romance in an historical setting (1999, viii).

[94] Campion's earlier title for *The Piano*.

[95] Symbols' and 'comprehensible themes' are discussed later in this chapter: the symbol of the piano as colonialist artifact; the symbolism of mud and other natural environments; the cross as Christian icon; costuming symbolising cultural and colonial restraints; guns and axes as more obvious symbols of oppression.

> In some ways I think I'm always trying to tell the same story, or interested in the same universe, and trying to redescribe it and re-find each story. ... I guess the films are made more or less for people who think like me and I certainly realise once the films come out that not everybody does think like me, or want to think like me, or want to question the way that I do. But I'm here on earth to not only try and make myself comfortable, but to puzzle and to think and to enquire, and I see that as irresistible, so it's not to be confronting, it's just to answer the irresistible urge to enquire really, and to ask questions and to probe and to think and to muse, you know (cited in Cleary 1999).

Accolades from the Film Industry plus excellent box office results were part of the response to Campion's 'irresistible' enquiring in *The Piano*. In 'Girl's Own Stories' (a title that refers to an early Campion film), Ashley Hay and Michael Duffy, report that *The Piano* received more praise in Australia when released in 1993 than almost any other film in recent years. It won twelve Australian Institute of Film awards, and the Palm d'Or for best film at Cannes (the first for a woman),[96] plus three Oscars, including an Academy Award for Campion for best original screenplay. *The Piano* was shown beyond the art-house circuit, on 63 screens around Australia at its zenith, and has earned more than $9 million dollars in Australia alone (Hay and Duffy 1996, 69).

Hay and Duffy write that Campion to some extent (in the films *An Angel At My Table* and *The Piano*) eschews traditional narrative in favour of extended moments to achieve a distinct and recognisable style which is reflected in a tendency towards the close-up rather than the wide, explanatory shot (Hay and Duffy 1996, 64). Yet, in *The Piano*, Campion's camera direction varies as her detailed way of seeing is expressed in landscapes and leaves, as well as the tics and twitches of emotions. Her 'feminine sensibility'

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[96] The award was shared with China's *Farewell to my Concubine.*

(Hay and Duffy 1996, 64) is particularly evident in closely focused and erotic images of fingers, eyes, skin, stockings, petticoats, and textures of fabric, tea-cups, wood, and fern, which contrast with expansive panorama of wild land and sea.[97] To say what is possibly obvious, Campion generally depicts intimacy between people, objects and place with close shots, and long, wide-ranging shots usually indicate the alienation of humans from their environments - as well as the wildness and grandeur of nature.[98] Few reviewers, however, note the connections between people and place, or connect the oppressions of women with nature, they are generally more involved with Campion's unusual characters.[99]

Hay and Duffy comment on the feminine qualities of Jane Campion films and the strong women characters in *The Piano*:

> Hers is the first body of work of such stature by one director in the history of the cinema to dwell so successfully on female characters. This is extraordinary - it has taken the cinema all this time to produce something approaching an equivalent to the novels of Jane Austen or George Eliot. Campion's films are not just about women; they reflect a sensibility which might be termed feminine (1996, 64).

Campion states that the author most influential to her work is Emily Bronte:

> I wanted to respond to [Bronte's] ideas in my own century. ... My exploration can be a lot more sexual, a lot more investigative of the power of eroticism. Then you get involved in actual bodyscape as well, because the body has certain effects - like a drug almost - certain

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[97] Stuart Dryburgh, the director of photography said: 'The camera's viewpoint on all this is that of a witness directing the viewer's attention in a very intimate way. Sometimes we go to places where the camera can't really go. We've been inside the piano, inside Stewart's pocket, right down to the level of hands and fingers and tea-cups' (cited in Campion 1993b, 141).

[98] In Scott's *Blade Runner,* establishing long and wide shots depict the reverse of 'grandness in nature' - a polluted city - we later see alienated people in the streets below.

[99] This is not so with essayists and critics. Essays in the anthology, *Piano Lessons* (1999), correct this lack.

> desires for erotic satisfaction which are very strong forces ... We've grown up with so many expectations that the erotic impulse is almost lost to us, but these characters have nothing to prepare them for its strength and power ... The romantic impulse is in all of us, but it's not part of a sensible way of living. It's a heroic path, and generally ends dangerously' (cited in Miles 1996, 151).[100]

The preface to the post-film novel, *The Piano* (1994) intimates Bronte's wariness of the dangerous slipping into the fantasy of unreal worlds, a danger that almost overwhelms Ada:

> Today I will not seek the shadowy region;
> Its unsustaining vastness waxes drear;
> And visions rising, legion after legion,
> Bring the unreal world too strangely near.[101]

The film brings 'the unreal world too strangely near' as it encompasses a triangular relationship from which a dangerous romance develops. Campion's *mise en scene* creates ambiances of 'strangeness' that change from the realistic traditions of colonial film to the fantastic and gothic and the surrealism of folk-tales. Both Ada and Flora are storytellers;[102] their stories are their connection with a mysterious past. There is a subtext in the film of shadowy stories: fairy stories, oppressive stories, stories of silent mermaids, captured women, handless maidens, and Bluebeard, a wife-murderer.[103]

The Journey

In the opening sequences of *The Piano* we see Ada preparing for

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[100] The latter part of this quotation is used in the preface to Campion's screenplay (1993b).

[101] Cited in Campion and Pullinger (1994)

[102] The story Flora most loves is about the piano-teacher who was her father, but she invents another story for Stewart's Aunt Morag in which Ada and another great singer are married in the Alps and Ada is struck dumb in a storm in which her husband was killed (Campion 1993b 31-32).

her journey. She is to travel from Scotland to marry a New Zealand settler, Alisdair Stewart, a man she has never met. The narration is Ada's. With her mind's 'voice' she tells us the circumstances in which she will leave her home:[104]

> The voice you hear is not my speaking voice,
> but my mind's voice.
>
> I have not spoken since I was six years old. No one knows why, not even me. My father says it is a dark talent and the day I take it into my head to stop breathing will be my last.
>
> Today he married me to a man I've not yet met. Soon my daughter and I shall join him in his own country. My husband says my muteness does not bother him. He writes and hark this: God loves dumb creatures, so why not he!
>
> Were good he had God's patience for silence affects everyone in the end. The strange thing is I don't think myself silent, that is, because of my piano. I shall miss it on the journey (Campion 1993b, 9).

Ada repeats her husband's words, 'hark this: God loves dumb creatures, so why not he'; she is, of course, shocked by this paralleling of her husband and God, and dumb creatures and herself.[105] These first words from her husband are a precurser of his insensitivity - or lack of understanding - that occurs throughout their relationship. Ada's 'dark talent' is also a forewarning of the mixed value of her willfulness. Even though Ada is at first treated as a commodity her will empowers her[106] - it also almost brings

[103] Campion comments on the film's blend of realism and fantasy: 'while the epic style of the film and landscape suggest the romantic genre, at the same time the people seem very real - so that you're never quite let out by any sense that the action is taking place in a fairy tale or romantic world. One of the clichés of romance is that the heroines are classic beauties, but I wanted there to be reality to our actors that counters pure romanticism' (Campion 1993b 139). Warner links *The Piano* with mermaid legends: 'The elemental union between the mute heroine and the watery wastes which first gave birth to her, as it were, when she appears on the pounded beach, and which almost reclaim her, places *The Piano* - consciously or unconsciously on Campion's part - within the body of mermaid legends ... '(1994, 406).

[104] Ada's 'voice' is heard only in the prologue and epilogue.

[105] Later in the film, Ada is likened - by Stewart and family members - to a caged bird and referred to as a 'pet'.

about her death.

At the end of their sea journey Ada and Flora are carried ashore. They are dwarfed by the immensity and power of their wild surroundings and the pounding sea that washes around them; then a close up increases the viewer's awareness of their vulnerability as the sea washes around their delicate shoes and petticoats. Through Ada's eyes we see the massive cliffs and dense forests that confront her. No-one is there to meet them. Wan, and obviously exhausted, Ada makes a decision to stay on the desolate beach. She dismisses the bawdy, tipsy boat crew rather than proceed with them to the town of Nelson. Sheltered only by a candle-lit, hooped, petticoat tent, she inventively spends the night with Flora. The camera moves from the wild environment into their tiny glowing space so that we see Ada's face softened by the light of the candle, easing the constraints of her uncomfortable and unsuitable clothes and the pins in her tightly braided hair. Ada's inventiveness, her finger story-telling, and her enjoyment of Flora, undermine cultural images of trapped maidens passively awaiting rescue by the hero. Her strength, courage and willfulness belie the fragility of her appearance. Mother and daughter have travelled far but with such a beginning it is easy for the viewer to imagine that there will be more to endure in their psychological and physical journey.

The scene in which Stewart finally arrives at the beach with George Baines and the Maori porters to collect Ada is a prefiguring of the

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[106] David Rhoads and Sandra Roberts explore the 'common themes of domination and liberation' in 'From Domination to Mutuality in *The Piano* and in the Gospel of Mark'. They describe *The Piano* as 'a dark film about power - the power of the will against the power of domination' (1998, 4).

triangular relationship which develops between Baines and Stewart and Ada. Campion brings to the viewer's attention differences between the two men as they stand on the beach facing Ada and Flora. Baines, a mediator between Stewart and the Maori porters, his face painted like a Maori, is what he appears to be, a European 'gone native'. He observes Ada's and Flora's fatigue and sea-sickness, and says, 'they look tired'. Stewart however, shows no consideration for Ada or Flora. He inspects Ada as if she is an unsatisfactory bargain and complains to Baines that she is 'stunted' (Campion 1993b, 22); not a very suitable helpmate for a man breaking in new land.

Land, Enclosure, and The Psychology of Mud

By refusing to transport Ada's piano Stewart makes a way for himself that is as murky as the mud through which he travels. As the party move from the vitality of what appears to be unimpacted New Zealand in the mid-nineteenth century the view changes. On arrival at Stewart's hut Ada and Flora face a wasteland surrounded by forest. Blackened tree stumps still smoulder and muddied paths choke out any growth.[107] Stewart's environment signifies that he does not identify with the antipodean land he occupies, that he has no sense of place, and that he has no more sensitivity to the land than he has for Ada and her needs.[108]

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[107] The location finder, Sally Sherratt said, 'it took some four weeks to cast the beaches of black sand and cliff, topped by bush of almost prehistoric density - and mud. In fact this landscape was to be a hybrid creation of distant and neighbouring locations jigsawed together to represent the lush difference of old New Zealand. Sherratt was warned by Campion, "Beware of the Bland Old Bush"' (cited in Campion 1993b, 142).

Jan Chapman, producer, observed Campion's care in selecting locations and this affected her own attitude to land: 'It was unlike any kind of location I've ever witnessed, because it was so detailed. You think bush is bush but Sally and Jane were having this conversation that was quite lyrical and passionate - about different kinds of trees! (cited in Campion 1993b, 142).

The deal made between Ada's father and Stewart is paralleled by Stewart's attempts to increase his possessions and his wealth by obtaining land from the Maori: they do not *do* anything with the land. The viewer sees that Stewart *does* something to his land; he seeks to control it by subduing growth and establishing boundaries - in the way of many Victorian Christian settlers, land, a commodity for colonisers, is being bought, sold, bartered and pegged. Stewart, unlike Baines, does not attempt to understand the Maori, or their ways. He fails to understand that in Maori tradition land is not to be sold; some land is sacred and to walk on it is *tapu* (Campion 1993b, 27), it cannot be possessed. When Stewart persists with an offer of guns a Maori chief spits upon him.

Unlike Stewart, Baines has learnt to integrate with the Maori, as well as with the land, to speak and to understand their language, and to share their jokes - even about his virility. He, like them is primitive;[109] he is accepted as part of their family, and protected by them in the love-sickness he later suffers for Ada after a barter he has made with Stewart goes astray.[110] When Baines later leaves the settlement, his Maori friend, Hira, says to him: 'You are human like us ... The *Pakeha*, they have no heart, they think only of land'

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[108] Stewart's relationship with the land is described in Campion and Pullinger's novel: '[Stewart] had been settled in New Zealand for a good few years now, and he had spent these same years fighting the bush. At first his land had provided a fine harvest of *Kauri* trees - the massively tall, straight-limbed and near knotless trees so valued for ship[s'] masts - and since then Stewart had battled against the continual wanton regrowth of all manner of vine and fern. He thought sometimes that if he paused for even one day the bush would overtake his labours, drowning his hard-won clearance in mossy green waves of luxuriant vegetation' (Campion and Pullinger 1996, 21).

[109] The culture/nature dichotomy of 'white' *Pakeha* and Maori, and colonialist aspects of the film are discussed by Bridget Orr (1999, 148-160).

[110] Campion writes in the novel that Baines always approaches the Maori village with respect, even though he visits often. '[H]e always felt privileged to be invited into this world so different and separate from his own' (Campion and Pullinger 1996,188).

(Campion 1993b, 104).

Until Baines offers land for the piano Stewart believes it worthless; he is relieved and amazed at Baines generosity when he releases the piano without requiring the return of his land. But Stewart's attitude changes when he becomes aware of the erotic role the piano has played between Ada and Baines. He imprisons Ada in his hut, barring and fencing windows and doors, treating Ada in the same oppressive and violent way that he treats the land that he encloses. The theme of encagement runs through the film: the encagement of Victorian women in their boned underclothes;[111] the encagement of Ada in a marriage not of her choosing; the fencing in of the land and Ada - even the mud is a trap into which Ada sinks. Mud is a suitable metaphor for the impact of colonialism and savagery to the land. Phillip Adams, an Australian critic and commentator, resistant to metaphor, and immune to 'feminine sensitivities' and fairy tales, called the film 'Mills and Boon in the mud' (Hay and Duffy 1996 69). At least Adams noticed the mud. Few film reviewers note the environments in which human characters move. Campion's direction, more even than Armstrong's in *Oscar and Lucinda*, emphasises the effects of environments on her characters, particularly Ada and Flora. In a series of highly symbolic scenes we see them handicapped not only by their delicate feminine boots and heavy garments, but also by the suction of the deep mud they wade through in the wake of Stewart. Invariably muddy are the ways trodden by Stewart and his relatives; they are bogged down in religious beliefs and their attempts to

[111] Some of Ada's discomforts were also Lucinda's in *Oscar and Lucinda*: 'It was the condition of [Lucinda's] adult life to feel it ... she was squeezed and blistered, pinched and hobbled' (Carey 1988, 251).

reproduce a Europeanised idea of 'home'.[112] Pathways appear to respond to characters. Around Stewart's home and around the school hall - where a play, *Bluebeard*, a medieval folk-tale of wife murder is enacted - they are almost unpassable. A labyrinth of planks is set up to avoid the mud as women and children are carried and wheelbarrowed through rain to the hall. Ada is forewarned of the mud that is symbolic of the hardships ahead of her. At the beginning of the film Stewart says to Ada: 'I suggest you prepare for a difficult journey. The bush will tear clothes and the mud is deep in places' (Campion 1993b, 26). Mud becomes associated not only with a difficult journey, but with Stewart, Bluebeard, and violence against women and the land.

In a scene where Stewart attempts to rape Ada, when she is on her way to Baines, the land takes on a gothic, infernal quality:

> The thick supplejack vines were like so many arms that reached out to bind her, gray snakes coiling around her, a terrible web itself in league with the man who brought her to this place (Campion and Pullinger 1996, 159).[113]

The mud that literally and metaphorically surrounds Stewart is

[112] New Zealand scenery - and mud - is obscurred by Stewart in a later scene in which he uses a European backdrop as part of the simulcra of a wedding photograph (reproduced in Campion 1993b viii). This is one of many ways in which Campion (like Armstrong in *Oscar and Lucinda*) critiques European settlers' attempts to recreate 'Home', and their ignorance in relation to colonised land.

[113] Andrew McAlpine, the production designer commented on the ways in which landscapes were altered to heighten the mood of a particular scene: 'Take the burning stump and mud landscape surrounding Stewart's house. Here we transplanted and charred dead trees to create the illusion of a very muddy five acres of primary slash and burn. I wanted the bride to be seen to be drawn into this dank darkness that is Stewart's and then step out into this green cathedral of *nikau* and *punga* that is Baines's life: a very gothic landscape, surrounded by this cool green light. Also, the setting for the scene where Stewart attacks Ada on the path to Baines's hut. This had too much openness, so we gave it a web of supplejack. It's such an incredible feature of New Zealand bush, this anarchical, black-branched creeper. It's very tough: you can't break it. So we devised this huge net, this horrible tentacled nightmare inside which Ada and Stewart struggle (cited in Campion 1993b, 140-141).

not part of Baines' environment. His dwelling is settled amidst lush trees and ferns, without visible impact on the surroundings. Ada and Flora are pictured relaxing near his hut, backgrounded by a canopy of luxuriant green leaves - a tableau of mother and child in nature. A journey traversed with Baines back to the beach and the piano is free of the mud of their previous journey. Pathways travelled with him become mud-free when they lead Ada towards desirable things or places, such as Baines' verdant home environment and the return to the piano on the beach. The beach then becomes an unthreatening, joyous place - so different from when Ada and Flora are first set ashore. Baines hears the exhilaration of Ada's piano playing and sees her rare smile, he observes Flora's running, cartwheeling and dancing, and the shell jewelled pattern of a seahorse, reminiscent of a musical clef, that Ada and Flora have created on the sand. Visibly touched by the beauty of sound and scene, Baines becomes entranced.

The Piano as Touchstone

When Ada looks, longingly, down from the cliff to the piano stranded on the beach, her anxiety and distress are conveyed as we hear the music in Ada's head and see the overwhelming and increasing distance between her and the piano. Like Ada and Flora in their awkward dress, the piano is out of place on the isolated beach - an alien in a strange and primitive land.[114] 1996, 30). Ada is as passionately attached to the piano, once her mother's, as she is to Flora; together with her silver notepad locket, they are her means of expression.[115] She is connected to the piano as if by an

[114] Michael Nyman, the composer of the music for the film, said that the 'aural scenography' is as important for him as the locations and the costumes' (Campion 1993b 150).

invisible umbilical cord. It responds to Ada's touch communicating not only her loneliness, her frustration, her anger, but also her joy and growing desire for Baines - and it is to this that he responds.[116]

Ada's piano is an ambiguous symbol of the Old World, of culture and of harmony, but 'like the wedding veil and the tea-cup' it 'becomes representative of a transported culture that shifts from "monstrous beauty to an emblem of death"' (Coombs and Gemmel 1999, vii). When Ada wishes to reject Stewart she refuses to play, she will not perform parlour skills, she will not 'speak'.[117] The piano is a metonym for Ada, 'it is itself an object of desire' (Goldsworth 1993, 47); like her it is treated as a possession, but it has a story of its own. Transported from Scotland to New Zealand, it is left on the beach for days, perhaps weeks; it is tuned after Baines transports it to his home in exchange for land he has bartered with Stewart. The piano becomes an instrument of seduction in which keys are traded in a sexual exchange, but Baines returns the piano to Ada prematurely because he decides that the deal is degrading.

The differences between the two men, Stewart and Baines, are emphasised by their attitudes to the piano. Stewart is as insensitive to Ada's needs for the piano as he is to her discomfort and fatigue

[115] Warner describes the voice Ada is allowed as a parlour skill. Parlour comes from *parler*, to speak (Warner1994, 406).

[116] Aunt Morag describes the disturbing power of Ada's playing to Stewart's cousin Nessie: 'she does not play the piano as we do ... she is a strange creature and her playing is strange, like a mood that passes into you. You cannot teach that, Nessie, one may like to learn, but that could not be taught. Your playing is plain and true and that is what I like. To have a sound creep inside you is not all pleasant ... '(Campion 1993b, 92).

[117] As Kerryn Goldsworth perceives, 'Ada bestows the same palm-curled, back-handed, slow-motion caress on the piano keyboard and on her husband's appalled and virginal backside; her longing is to be where the piano is, to touch it, to generate a response from it, is as intense as anything either of the men comes to feel for her, or she for them' (1993, 46). This is so, with an exception: Baines demonstrates a similar longing when he takes his shirt to dust the piano; naked, he caresses it as if it is Ada.

when they first meet. Like Baines he becomes changed by the piano, but his moods swing, from disinterest to passionate violence, the latter when he learns from Flora that the piano is an accessory to Ada's and Baines' erotic relationship. Baines observes what Stewart does not, that music is Ada's language, and that the piano is the means by which he can know her. The patriarchal treatment Ada has received from her father and Stewart is perpetuated by Baines at first; he treats Ada and the piano as possessions to be traded, by bartering eighty acres of his land with Stewart in exchange for Ada's piano. Ada writes her angry response to the barter on her notepad locket, 'it's Mine, it's Mine, it's Mine' - yet as a married Victorian woman her property belongs to her husband. Under the pretext of piano lessons, Baines trades favours with Ada, for the return of the piano, so many keys for so many visits. Her resistance to his sexual advances finally make him realise that his actions demean them both, making him 'wretched' and Ada a 'whore'. This, and his care for the piano and its tuning, makes it impossible for the viewer to continue seeing Baines as crude and illiterate. Through the piano he becomes changed; his relationship with Ada also changes. Ada does not speak and Baines does not read, but together they find a language via the piano.

The Maori characters are excluded from this language. They cannot find the voice in the piano. Mana, one of the Maori men wears a piano key as an earing, emphasising its strangeness. The piano is a burden for them, but one that the Maori crew are prepared to carry in several journeys between the beach and Stewart's and Baines' houses, and then in the longboat which carries Ada and Baines to the town of Nelson. When the weight

of the piano endangers all in the boat Ada insists that it be pushed overboard, it is 'spoiled' (by Stewart's axe attack). Ada watches the rope that is attached to the piano snake past her feet. Then she willfully places her foot in a loop of the rope, it tightens and Ada is dragged down into the sea. In this dreamlike sequence Ada appears calm. This could be a way out for her; a release from struggle, after years of introversion and the cocoon of silence that she has imposed on herself from childhood. When it seems that Ada will drown she suddenly resists the downward plunge and levers herself free from her shoe and the cord which binds her to the piano. Her mind's 'voice' speaks:

> What a death!
> What a chance!
> What a surprise!
> My will has chosen life!? (Campion, 1991, 147).

Ada breaks the link between herself and the piano, as well as her mother and the old world she has left. Only when Ada breaks free cuts this umbilical cord is she able to progress in her journey. Dispossessed of the weight of her mother's piano, Ada, like Herman Melville's orphan, Ishmael, is reborn from the sea (Melville 1972, 687). 'She is forced to choose between two fates: that of a silent but beautiful return to the sea, or that of an ordinary mortal woman, learning to speak' (Attwood 1998, 85). The tragedy of possession ends as Ada wills life and surfaces from the silent womb-sea and the psychological depths that she has reached in her journey. Like Fatima in the *Bluebeard* play, Ada is rescued - the men heave her out of the sea into the longboat. She does not become a victim because she has sought independence and sexual knowledge.[118]

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[118] Consider Kate Chopin's female protagonist, Edna Pontellier, for example, whose 'awakening' brought about her death by drowning (Chopin 1984).

Unlike Bluebeard's other wives; the mermaids of fairy tale; and other female heroes who 'become erased' in the narrative, Ada survives.

Bluebeard the Wife Murderer

For a month after the wedding they
lived and had good cheer,
And then said Bluebeard to his wife.
"I'll say goodbye, my dear;
"Indeed it is but six weeks that I
shall be away,
"I beg that you'll invite your friends,
and feast and dance and play;
"And all my property I'll leave
confided to your care:
"Here are the keys of all my chests,
there's plenty and to spare

Campion foreshadows Stewart's attack on Ada with shadow play on sheets in the macabre enactment of *Bluebeard,* that the settlers perform for the community at Christmas-time. *Bluebeard* dramatically reminds the viewer of the history of serial violence against women, curious women, women wanting to *know* (Pinkola Estés 1993, 39-73; Attwood, 1998, 90; Warner 1994, 244-246).[119] There are reverberations of the Eve and Pandora myths in *Bluebeard,* the patriarchal myths that signify a masculine desire to control women's desires to know.[120]

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[119] According to Warner, *Bluebeard* 'thrills like a Hitchcock film before its time, it foreshadows thriving twentieth century fantasies about serial killers and Jack the Rippers' (1994, 241).

[120] In Walter Crane's painting of 'Bluebeard', Eve, the first woman to be affected by curiosity, stands behind Bluebeard's wife as she wonders why she should not use the key to enter the forbidden chamber. Warner writes about the Edenic inner structure of the *Bluebeard* tale (Perrault 1697) and Walter Crane's painting, as a direct analogy with Eve: 'Bluebeard acts like God the Father, prohibiting knowledge - the forbidden chamber is the tree of knowledge of good and evil - and Fatima is Eve, the woman who disobeys and, through curiousity, endangers her life'. 'As in the story of the fall, the serpent may be at fault, but Eve is blameworthy too. In many of the retellings of *Bluebeard,* the blue chamber is presented as the fitting penalty for wives' previous wickedness in defying a husband's commands' (Warner 1994, 244-246).

The Reverend Father is Master of Ceremonies for the play that is performed on Christmas Day - a play that images death rather than a nativity. The special day, together with the cross displayed on his walls, is a subtle and ambiguous reminder of biblical myths, of Jesus's suffering, and the need for atonement - it is also a covert reminder of a theocracy in whose name much blood had been spilt. The Christian Church is not innocent of crimes against women, particularly knowledgeable women, or women seeking to know.[121] The bloodied sheets that encircle the decapitated heads of Bluebeard's victims are designed to titillate viewers by what are in fact horrific anti-woman fantasies. Bloodied sheets are a reminder of primitive practises in which sheets are hung out of windows to prove a woman's virginity on her wedding night. A cardboard axe is prepared by the Reverend for the play, and used to tease the female members of his family, Aunt Morag and Nessie. This as well as the animal blood used by him to spill on sheets for more realism and gore, is a reminder that religion does not always work against violence.[122]

The axe that is Bluebeard's weapon in the play is a masculine tool on which the camera repeatedly focuses, like the guns that Stewart attempts to trade; both the axe and the gun are symbols of power used in the film as Stewart attempts to clear forest and chop timber, to strike a deal for land with the Maori chief, to damage the piano, to maim Ada, and to threaten Baines. When the Maori see an axe

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[121] Bleeding (menstruating) women were considered unclean and loathsome according to the Torah (Lev. 12:2, 18:19).

[122] Warner writes about the way that the *Bluebeard* story 'confronts the mystery of sexuality, and, by dramatizing so bloodily the terror of defloration, helps to assuage it' (1994, 246). Warner refers to Freudian male commentatators.' It is difficult for me, however, to imagine that such a murderous tale could assuage female fears; someone is 'deflowering', taking the bloom from the woman.

used against women when watching the *Bluebeard* drama, they think that the women in the play are being killed, that what they see before them is *real. Bluebeard* reminds audiences that it is not unusual for women to be murdered by their husbands, the drama *reflects* reality.[123]

Ada is betrayed by Flora who acts out a fantasy of angelic righteousness wearing the wings that are part of her costume in the *Bluebeard* drama and carrying the puritanical ideas of sin that she has learnt. Her possessiveness towards Ada, her resentment at her exclusion from her mother's relationship with Baines, and her need for a man to call Papa, all lead her to carry the piano key engraved with Ada's message away from Baines to Stewart. He has become the surrogate father she yearns for, the man to whom her mother 'belongs'. Like Bluebeard's wife, Ada defies her husband's commands when she sends the piano key to Baines, and for this she is punished.

The keys of the piano, separated in value (black from white) during the exchange between Ada and Baines are a reminder of paradox: that even with opposites there can be a merging. The key is an icon of love, a key to the heart, but Ada's key also symbolises betrayal and danger. Keys opens doors to sexual curiosity and, paradoxically, to both life and death. Symbols can be fickle - as love can be fickle. Like Fatima's key, Ada's key becomes not a symbol of love but one of betrayal and violence when Flora takes it to Stewart to disclose a dreadful secret. In the *Bluebeard* folk tale a key is the catalyst of Bluebeard's deadly attacks but only by

[123] Such event are regularly recorded in our news media.

using the key and facing danger, and the truth, can Bluebeard's wife, Fatima, bring his murderous reign to an end. Disciplinarian writers of the *Bluebeard* tale tell of the fate of Bluebeard's wives written on the wall as 'the fate of broken promises and disobedient curiousity'. Another Bluebeard 'manages - with his dying breath - to continue moulding his wife: "I hope she will in future never break a promise, disobey those to whom she promises submission, not give way to the impulse of improper and forbidden curiousity"' (Warner 1994, 246). It is Stewart, however, not Ada, who is the improper curious observer when he spies on Ada and Baines.

The Gaze

> No term has been more important to the visual disciplines over the last twenty years than the gaze. The gaze creates and recreates the identity of the gazer by at once making us aware of visual perception and also that others can see us. The re-evaluation of looking as the gaze ... has transformed our understanding of issues (Mirzoeff ed., 1998, 391).[124]

Stewart becomes a voyeur as he obsessively watches Ada with Baines through a hole in the wall of Baines' house and later lies on the ground to watch Ada through the floorboards. He is made to appear ridiculous to viewers of the film (a device used to subvert viewer voyeurism) as he stares through the peephole - while a dog licks his hand. John Berger points out in *Ways of Seeing*, that in many works of art the director, the artist, or an unseen person, is often a voyeur gazing at a vulnerable, and generally naked, female (Berger 1985, 50-55),[125] whereas in Campion's film we see Baines

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[124] In 'Representing Whiteness: Seeing *Wings Of Desire*, and 'The Oppositional Gaze', bell hooks reminds us that many feminists, although aware of the work on the gaze and sexuality in relation to women, have failed to consider the ways in which we see people of colour, particularly females; also how they are frequently excluded from strong roles, and often cast as stereotyped characters (bell hooks 1996, 197-213). See also 'Gender and the Gaze', five essays in (Easthope 1993, 111-178); 'The Female Spectator', four essays in (Thornham 1999, 109-158); Attwood's 'Weird Lullaby' (1998, 85-101); and Laura Mulvey's now classic essays (1999a, 1999b).

fully exposed and facing a fully dressed woman who *looks at him.* The 'gendered [masculine] gaze' is subverted in *The Piano*'s erotic scenes as the camera broadens the perspective beyond Stewart's gaze. Our surprised look joins with Ada's when she draws aside a veil-like curtain and sees Baines, naked in front of her. It is still extremely rare in film for the camera to be turned on a naked man, but in this and other sexually intimate scenes the camera presents a perspective that is *not* one in which a woman is objectified with solely the male spectator in mind. 'The erotic sensibility which informs Ada's encounter with Baines ... refuses conventional representations of sexuality' (Attwood 1998, 95). Instead of exploring Ada's naked female body as if through the eyes of Stewart, the viewer sees what he sees, a naked *couple* sharing their passion.[126]

Earlier, when Stewart is *en route* to first meet Ada he looks at his own reflection in a miniature photograph of her that he holds in his hand as he combs his hair. Ada's backgrounded image forms the shadow that enables Stewart to see what he wants to see - himself (Attwood 1998, 90). Stewart, styled as an authoritarial figure, a man in control of Baines and Maori men and women, becomes a subject of amusement for the Maori as well as the viewers who are watching him. Stewart, as we learn later from his appraisal

[125] Berger extends his understanding of the gaze in relation to land. To develop his argument he uses a Gainsborough painting in which the subjects, Mr. and Mrs Andrews, are in the forefront of land they own. They appear proprietorial. Mr. Andrew's stance with hunting dogs at his side and rifle in his hand implies that he has the land under his control (1985, 106). Stewart, similarly, obtains and controls land with the use of the gun.

[126] In *Seeing and Believing,* Miles follows the history of feminist film theory and notes how the theory has expanded from gender issues to include issues of difference among women as well as in women and men. There exists a mass of contradictions within the person herself and - by extension - the existences of others with different perspectives and sensitivities. This complicates the issue of the gaze when differences are more complex than specifically gendered male or female. Also the issues of race and class, sexual orientation and age need to be considered (1998, 139).

of Ada on her arrival, and the constant combing of his hair, is concerned with appearances, his own most of all. The mirror, Berger writes, was often used as a symbol of the vanity of woman (1985, 51); in Campion's cunning reversal the mirror symbolises the vanity of man rather than woman, and Stewart the epitomy of vanity.

During the early morning beach scene - in which we meet the main characters of the film, Stewart, Baines, the Maori men and women, and Ada and Flora - Ada is being observed, directly and indirectly, by the other characters. We, the viewers, observe them all and see that there is a hierarchy of looking. Stewart inspects Ada to see what kind of a wife she might make. He engages Baines in the act of looking when he says, 'what do you think?' A Maori pantomimes Stewart's actions, others watch his mimickry. Unlike some oppressed blacks, who have been taught that they are not to look, especially at white women (hooks 1999, 309) the Maori in Campion's film not only look, they touch. One man looks under Ada's skirt. All this looking and touching has the effect of undermining the hierarchy of the 'white' *Pakeha* man, Stewart - and at a time when he wishes to impress and to be in control.[127] Campion's deliberately subversive direction has the effect of ridiculing Stewart, who is awkward and unsmiling and unable to communicate with either Ada or the Maori; increasing our delight in the Maori characters - who are having fun - and our sympathies with the two obviously discomforted white women. The wearing of European clothes by the Maori signifies the tragedy of the subsuming of their culture. They appear childish, and - by

[127] See Lynda Dyson's essay 'The Return of the Repressed' for an exploration of whiteness and colonialism (1999, 111-121).

superficial European standards - ungroomed, especially when compared to Ada and Flora in their dark neat dresses and bonnets and Stewart in his too tight clothing. The Maori, however, wear their bits and pieces of European clothing comfortably, and this, together with other of Campion's subversions, counteracts what could appear to be racist images of superior whites and inferior blacks.

Ada's wilfulness does not allow her to become an objectified example of domesticated, feminine beauty. Because Ada does not speak she *looks* to make sure that she is properly understood.[128] She resists being an object to be gazed upon. When first seen in the film her fingers cover her face. Later Ada resists Stewart's attempts to make a photographic image of his desires for a conventional wife, in traditional wedding garments, in a pseudo European environment - a backdrop hides the mud, greenery, and the rain. Ada rips off the hired wedding dress, carelessly worn over her day clothes, and leaves to join Flora who has been excluded from the photograph of Stewart's idealised partnership.[129]

Not Real Men?

Campion's story is, as Rhoads and Roberts, state, 'all the more compelling because of the complexity and contradictions that describe the characters':

> There are times when the viewer is drawn into sympathy with Stewart, trying so hard to woo this strong-willed wife, exposing his intense vulberability in spite of himself. It would be easier to watch a two-

[128] This is most evident in the scene of Stewart's second attempted rape of Ada.

[129] Like the backdrop, the dress (that the Reverend tries on) is a ridiclous simulcra, it is literally only a front, tapes tie it at the back.

dimensional figure like Bluebeard, depicted in the play that prefigures Stewart's violence (Rhoads and Roberts, 1998, 4).

This complexity does not exist in the Maori characters in the film, yet Stewart and Baines are presented as men capable of change and of both good and evil. They are not fixed as 'macho' white heroes or pathetic victims. Stewart means to love Ada, but, as the film makes clear, he is baffled and frustrated because he does not know how. Christian stories advocating compassion and love have either not been part of the Reverend Father's household teaching or have not aided Stewart. He is exposed in lustful and unchristian activities when he spies on Ada and Baines, yet when Ada caresses him in a somnambulatory and sensual act he appears vulnerable and shocked at such a female initiation, or sexual invasion.[130] Stewart's hypocritical and puritanical attitudes are ironically exposed when he forces Flora to scrub burned and blackened trees with soap and water. Flora plays with the Maori children using trees to mimic the love-making she has seen. For Stewart then, there is a link between the trees and sex - both are dirty.

Stewart, superficially more *civilised* than Baines and the Maori, becomes not only hypocritical but *brutal.* He attempts to rape Ada on two occasions, once in the gothic scene of the gloomy, vine-entangled forest when he intercepts Ada on the track to Baines' house; the second time is after Stewart's discovery of Ada's love for Baines, when she is almost unconscious after his amputation of her finger. Unthinking of the horror Flora has

[130] Campion describes Ada's subversive action: 'Ada actually uses her husband Stewart as a sexual object - this is the outrageous morality of the film - which seems very innocent but in fact has the power to be very surprising. I think many women have had the experience of being a sexual object, and that's exactly what happens to Stewart (Campion 1993b 138-9).

experienced he wraps Ada's finger in a cloth telling her: 'Take this to Baines. Tell him that if he ever tries to see her again I'll take another off another and another and another!' (Campion 1993b, 104). Stewart's treatment of Flora, and his cruelty and domination of Ada, is vile, but like Baines, Stewart is capable of change. He does not sustain his violent emotions when he takes his rifle to Baines' hut and sees the sleeping man and Flora protectively wrapped in a rug at his side. He wakens Baines with the butt of his gun and says:

> She has spoken to me. I heard her voice.
> There was no sound, but I heard it here
> (he presses his forehead with a palm of his hand).
> Her voice was there in my head. I watched her lips,
> they did not make the words,
> yet the harder I listened the clearer I heard her,
> as clear as I hear you, as clear as I hear my own voice ...
> She said, "I have to go, let me go, let Baines
> take me away, let him try and save me. I
> am frightened of my will, of what it might do
> it is so strange and strong" (Campion 1993b, 113-114).

Stewart learns from Ada - he is able to 'hear' her and to let her go - he may also improve his relations with the Maori and the land; but this we can only imagine as Stewart has little more to say in the film

Silence - the Last Resort?

> Silence gives the proper grace to women' (Sophocles)

Campion uses the theme of silence to explore vulnerability through Ada's elective silence and her struggle to speak a language of defence against Victorian patriarchy.[131] In the 1850s, the period in which the film is set, there would have been few choices for an unmarried mother - particularly for Ada who has been mute since

she was a child. What the viewer learns throughout the film is that because of Ada's silence she has an extraordinary dependency on the piano, it being a medium for her desires as well as her 'language'.

Contrary to his statement in the letter quoted at the beginning of the film, Stewart *is* affected by Ada's silence - and her need for the piano. He believes that her finger tapping on the table - an imaginary piano - might be a symptom of madness, an old, old, anti-woman story (Felman 1997, 7-20, Warner 387-387),[132] and that this could be the reason for her lack of affection towards him. Stewart's attack on her piano and then her finger extends Ada's silence. Shock concentrates her will. She stops playing the piano. In 'The Silence of the Daughters' Warner discusses the silencing of women and 'Campion's twin motives of repression and rebellion' established at the film's start. Ada resists and overcomes her constricted fate by her refusal to acquiesce, symbolised by her muteness (1994, 387-408).

Hay and Duffy write that Ada, like the heroine of Campion's films *Sweetie* and Janet Frame in *An Angel at my Table*, has been categorised by some as a 'lunatic' woman. But this, they say, is

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[131] Lorraine Anderson describes the Victorian woman as 'a bird in a gilded cage': Ada's willfull refusal to speak is a 'refusal to participate in culture, a Victorian culture that prescribes women's role in detail and denies women's sexuality completely'. Female sexual desires were considered illegitimate. Rampant sexuality was equated with wilderness. Ada represents nature resisting the grip of culture; her conception of a child ("Flora") was out of wedlock. The true Victorian woman was the woman tamed and civilized ... The Victorian lady was expected to cultivate a genteel interest in nature that kept her securely behind the garden gate, safe from the wilderness outside, and safe as well, presumably, from the wildness inside themselves' (Anderson 2000 pc).

[132] Women can also find themselves 'falling into madness when the world does not recognise them and they cannot recognise themselves in the world'. As bell hooks writes: 'This is exemplified in the lives of people like Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Virginia Woolf, and Zora Neale Hurston (1996, 118).

not accurate: 'they are simply women marked somehow - by themselves or by others - as outsiders, as even slightly beyond normal (Hay and Duffy 1996, 70). The Bronte quotation (used earlier) in the preface to Campion and Pullinger's novel foreshadows the story of Ada's imaginative and lonely world as an outsider. Judgements about those who enter shadowy worlds are very often made by men; they were the early writers, of myth, folklore, history, and psychoanalyses of women. Attwood writes that the tales men write 'are often composed as riddles, but they turn women into riddles. They pose questions like 'what do women want?' but do not allow women to compose an answer (1998, vol. 58, 85). Attwood observes that silent figures such as Ada:

> seem only to embody that set of questions which men have asked about women and answered themselves, finding them to be alien disorderly creatures who bring down punishment on themselves unless they sacrifice themselves for love, trading their desires for men's protection ... (1998, 86).

Yet it is Ada who 'speaks' in the opening and closing sequences of the film. As Attwood writes, she also 'speaks seductively for female desire' (1998, 86). At times Ada is perverse, cruel even, in her treatment of her husband and Baines. For instance, during the *Bluebeard* play she places her hand in Stewart's, confusing Stewart and tormenting Baines. Ada decides the rules of the barter for the piano, as she does in their slowly developing relationship. She smacks Baines' face when he does not understand the desire she has developed for him; she also makes Stewart succumb to her wishes - her need to be with Baines and to go away with him. Ada's rebellious silence may be her response to oppression and the restrictions of patriarchy but she learns to make her own choices, fulfilling her own desires.

A mystery in the film is, however, left unsolved.[133] What was it that made Ada speechless at the age of six? Silence can be the result of exclusion and oppression, but it can also be a tool by which women resist and deny patriarchy and the domination of male constructed language. Ada's muteness defies any dualistic hierarchy that places rationality above emotion. It is because of the strength and intensity of her will and her deep feelings that Ada is able to survive - even when tempted by death and the silence of the sea:

> There is a silence where hath been no sound
> There is a silence where no sound may be,
> in the cold grave - under the deep , deep sea
> - Thomas Hood [134]

Once upon a Time

In what seems to be a second and contradictory ending to the film, renewal and happiness are associated with urban ideas of home in the town of Nelson, and signified by romantic imagery: whiteness, purity, a floating, flimsy curtain, an embrace, Ada learning to speak and playing a new piano - all as if fantasised through Flora's eyes. Is this ending - with the appeal of a 'happy ever after' add-on - designed to protect audiences from dismal endings and the producers from reduced box-office takings ?

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[133] All (unfortunately) is explained in the novel (Campion and Pullinger 1994 18-19).

[134] 'Sonnet-Silence' (1799-1845; Campion 1993b,123). The silence of the sea is, for Thomas Hood, the silence of death, but - for sea inhabitants - there are, of course, sounds: fish sounds, whale and seal calls, and languages of minute sea-creatures. Even when we immerse our heads and bodies in the sea we hear sounds, they are different, but nevertheless they are there. See *New Scientist* 's special report on how animals·communicate, 'Look who's Talking' (April 2000, 28-45).

Louis Nowra expresses the frustration and pressures that can occur during film production especially if test audiences fail to respond positively to a movie:

> From the moment the director first calls "action", the screenwriter is forgotten. During the shoot, directors will change the script, weather and location will force changes, and actors will demand changes or will be unable to say certain lines; and after the shoot comes the crucial editing, where scenes are cut and rearranged to fit the rhythm and sense of the story, Reshoots can be made if test audiences don't like or misunderstand parts of the movie. The tacked-on optimistic ending to *The Piano* (1993) and the Grand Guignol ending of *Fatal Attraction* (1987) are examples of this (Nowra 1999, 7).

Is it the same old story - the gift and the magic kiss of the loving prince that brings Ada fully to life? Like the handless maiden of many folk tales, Ada's finger, crafted in silver, is restored by a 'nobleman' who brings love to the 'maiden' (Pinkola Estés'1992, 387-456). In the tales recorded by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, the depths of despair into which the maiden plunges after the loss of her hand is a necessary part of her journey before her en*light*enment. To be given silver hands is to be invested with 'the skills of spirit hands', as Estés writes:

> the healing touch, the ability to see in the dark, the ability to have powerful knowing through physical sensing. ... The maiden is invested, at this stage of her journey, with the power of the wounded healer. She has been able to endure and so to continue through the final stages of her journey (Pinkola Estés 1993, 428).

The loss of a finger is a severe handicap for Ada. When unable to play the piano she is voiceless - silenced against her will. Her silver finger strengthens her bond with Baines; no greater gift could he give her than to restore what she had lost; it is a gift that helps to make her whole.

Conclusion

The Piano, with its elements of fairy story, mythology, and the gothic, turns story about so that we may examine it from a perspective more favourable to women than mainstream cinema generally provides. The film transcends the trite romanticism of a 'happy ever after' love story when placed in the mythological and psychological context of a great and difficult heroic journey, through darkness to the light; immersion in water; rebirth, with hope in a new world and a new partnership.[135] Environments which alternate from the real to the gothic celebrate the wild as a vital part of the protagonist's journey. Ada passes through these varying environments and endures; she is a petite yet strong heroine who rebels at enclosure of any kind. To pass through psychic and literal wilderness, as Ada does, *is* an enlightening and strengthening process.

Campion subverts the tradition of the passive waiting woman; a sinful Eve; land and woman as object, spectacle, victim or commodity. Both Stewart and Baines succumb to the strength of Ada's will as they give up their attempts to possess her. When Ada is no longer treated as a possession she breaks her silence; she usurps biblical authority (1 Timothy 2:11-15) and attempts to silence women, by becoming a music teacher. Ada has skills to share with others and she is prepared to do so, even though she believes she

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[135] Campion subverts the traditional archetype of the male journey by casting a mute female in the role of hero. In Campion's story the obstacles to the hero's desire form the action of comedy, and the overcoming of them the comic resolution. Ada comes from the lower or chaotic world, the sea, makes a great journey, is 'reborn' after being obstructed by a patriarchal figure, the antagonist or enemy (Stewart). He is then overcome before the romantic conclusion in which Ada and Baines will, presumably, live happy ever after in a new society (see Northrop Frye (1973,158-188).

is the 'town freak' (Campion, 1991, 117). Ada enters fully into life when she is able to express her own desire in response to Baines. His character also develops when he ceases to treat Ada as an object of his own desire and demonstrates his care for her by listening, responding to her needs and her desires, thereby their relationship becomes mutual.

At times Baines appears an oaf, mocked by other settlers for his pagan ways, but appearance - as the film demonstrates - is deceptive. Baines' insights, his compassion, his ability to love, and his humility within nature, are the qualities which Melville ascribed to Ishmael, the sole survivor of *Moby-Dick* (Melville, 1972). These qualities are intrinsic ingredients in comedy for the survival of protagonists. Meeker, in *The Comedy of Survival,* describes comedy as that which 'seeks reconciliation of will and desire rather than the conquest of one by the other', and that 'when ecological balances are disturbed, comic action seeks their restoration. What is more, comedy seeks joy' (Meeker 1980, 156).

Campion's direction in *The Piano,* as Hay and Duffy have pointed out, is outstanding in the history of cinema for what they describe as a 'feminine sensibility' (Hay & Duffy 1996, 69) This sensibility extends towards an ecological sensibility as Campion stimulates our ways of seeing and ways of hearing and firmly establishes the link between the silencing and treatment of women and the silencing and treatment of nature. Although the focus of *The Piano* is mostly centred on humans and their stories, nonhuman nature is a vital - though non-verbal - part of Campion's filmic narrative to which the producer of the film, Jan Chapman responded:

> Being an Australian I didn't know the New Zealand bush, I have a feeling for it now - it was really a major player in the film. And now I also feel that it is very much part of New Zealand, that the relationship to the land is fundamental there' (cited in Campion 1993b, 142).

This response by Chapman is an accolade for Campion's ability to influence others with her observations of nature that extend into her film-making. They introduce the viewer to the 'more than human' protagonists, for example the trees that 'speak' to Ada; the 'music' in the shell patterns on the beach made by Ada and Flora and untold stories in the sea, rocks and cliffs, stories far more ancient than those of the human characters in the film. External landscapes symbolise the inner landscapes that are emphasised by Ada's muteness. When she is fenced in by Stewart Ada looks through the window and her longings are translated by music and the wind, as well as the trees, all merge. Ada's speechlessness sensitises the viewer to Campion's exploration of the multiplicity of language, what it means to be enclosed by others, and what it means to be not just the female 'other' but also the non-verbal, nonhuman 'other'. As Anderson so importantly observes, many reviewers of the film seem to have missed the association of women and nature altogether; this she believes is more a comment on how strong is the grip of our particular cultural paradigm than on the skill of the filmmaker (Anderson 2000 pc).[136]

The film's urban domesticated ending with Ada in the town of Nelson, playing the piano with her prosthetic finger, and learning to speak, does, however, detract from the power of wildness

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[136] To understand the movie Anderson believes that we need to look at the elements that are uncontrollable: the rain that pours down on the wedding, the daughter who goes against her mother's wishes, the woman's passion for a man not her husband. (Anderson 2000 pc).

established in earlier scenes. The possibility for new settlers to live in a harmonious relationship with the Maori in *their* environment - as Baines did before the arrival of Ada - is not further explored by Campion. Ada comes from the sea and it seems as if, cyclically and wilfully, to the womb of the sea she is to return. Such an ending is not, however, psychologically satisfying - for maturity the umbilical cord must be broken. Campion's reconciliatory ending, of comedy rather than tragedy, and of partnership rather than possession, celebrates life - of which wildness is an integral part.[137] She also reminds us that tragedy can occur when humans, in their hubris, exercise the belief that they are empowered to possess, and then to dominate, other beings or the land.[138]

In the following chapter, '*Jesus of Montreal*: Stories within Stories', Denys Arcand, in his multi-layered and contrasting film, explores institutional oppression and hubris by paralleling oppressions in the time of Jesus and Montreal in the twentieth Century.

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[137] Northrop Frye writes that the move from tragedy to comedy is part of a mythical movement in which the vegetable world supplies the annual cycle of seasons. Within these seasons life is frequently assimilated to organic growth: maturity, decline, death - and rebirth in another individual form. The literary character of romance is 'the mythos of summer', a victory over winter and the triumph of life and love over the wasteland. 'Within the four main types of mythical movement there is within romance, within experience, down and up ... The upward movement is the comic movement' (Frye 1973, 162).

[138] Kerryn Goldsworth suggests that: 'Maybe Ada's long-standing refusal to engage in conversation with the world can be read as a kind of hubris, inviting retribution' (1993, 46). This interpretation, however, fails to recognise Ada's *different* conversation with the world.

Chapter Five

Jesus of Montreal: Stories Within Stories

> ... among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananai'ah, Mish'a-el, and Azari'ah; therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologists who *were* in all his realm. Thus Daniel continued until the first year of king Cyrus (Daniel 1: 19-21).[139]

Jesus of Montreal (1989), written and directed by Denys Arcand, is a French-Canadian film, set in and around the shrine of Saint Joseph, in the city of Montreal.[140] The story revolves around the lives of five young actors, Daniel Coulombe, Mireille Fontaine, Martin Durocher, René Sylvestre, and Constance Lazure. Daniel is engaged by a priest character, Raymond Leclerc, to produce the Passion Play, performed annually at the shrine - to update it and modernise it a little.[141] Life and art merge as Daniel in his daily life confronts a post-Christian society with the force of an enduringly challenging spirituality (Babington and Evans 1993, 98). He becomes like the Jesus character he portrays: Daniel goes out to seek his 'disciples'; he passionately protests against the charlatans

[139] Old Testament biblical references are to the 'New King James Version' of the Holy Bible (1982).

[140] A major religious shrine situated on top of Mount Royal. To Québécois there is a history to the Shrine that is relevant to the film. Montreal - formerly *Ville-Marie*, the city of Mary - is, for a Catholic, a place of pilgrimage and healing where 'Brother Andrew originally dispersed the cure' (Pallister 1995, 382).

[141] Most of Arcand's namings have one or several meanings. For example, Arcand's main character is Daniel Coulombe. *Coulombe* means dove. In biblical mythology the dove symbolises hope and the overcoming of disaster. The Holy Spirit, depicted as a dove, has, theoretically, a status equal to that of Christ or of God the Father in Christianity (Sax 1998, 50). But Daniel's name also prefigures disaster: it connects him with the apocalyptic Books of Revelation and Daniel. The book of Daniel was written to encourage the Jews to keep faith under persecutions of Antiochus IV of Syria (Collins 1985, 157). See Ruether for the two biblical references to Apocalypse in 'Revelation' and 'Daniel' (1994, 74).

of the city; he practices as well as preaches love and goodwill; he suffers the little children to come unto him;[142] and he dies on the cross. In scenes late in the film he speaks in apocalyptic language to commuters in a subway as if he *is* Jesus.[143] Daniel, the Jesus character of the old story, becomes a Christ-figure in a modern world (Barnes 1997, 177).

Reality and verisimilitude converge as Arcand uses interweaving devices: plays within film, films within film, and the use of parable, allegory, parody, comedy and satire. Included in Arcand's life-mimicking collage are television and radio reviews of Daniel's production of the Passion Play; Hamlet's soliloquy within the Passion Play; a video recording of a previous production of the Passion Play; a widescreen cinematic version of the great life-giving explosion known as the 'big bang'; a television commercial for perfume; an audition for a beer commercial; and a pornographic film in production.

Passivity in the viewer is prevented as Arcand alternates the film's pace and moods. He exposes the multiple techniques that provide layers of story within the film and the multi-media devices that can deceive the gullible. His metacriticism parodies and critiques his own activities as a film director, as well as the film industry in general. Arcand invites the viewer to look at the way stories are woven and interpreted, and to examine the techniques which can exclude, edit, and dub; that can superimpose sound on image, image on sound, and image on image. How is the camera used? For

[142] Rosalie, daughter of one of the actors, Constance, comes to Daniel to play in their shared appartment (Pallister 1995, 386).

[143] 'Daniel-Jesus' is used for the character Daniel when he is performing in the Passion Play as Jesus. In Hebrew Daniel means, 'My judge is God' (Barnes 1997, 186).

what purposes? What is dubbed, what is edited, what is suppressed? Who writes the texts, and for what reasons? What is blasphemy? What is miracle, trickery, or science? What is truth, what is history, what is fiction? Look at the ways women are demeaned. Do men suffer similar treatment? If so, how, and why do they?

Arcand combines in one film what is usually found in many: romance, religion, pornography, comedy and tragedy. As Marsh and Ortiz state, we are accustomed to choosing from a variety of genres when we go to the cinema today:

> (the action picture, the detective story, the costume drama or "heritage" film, the gangster movie, the horror film, the Western, the sci-fi movie, the musical, the erotic thriller, the road movie, the biopic etc.). In the primitive cinema the number of such genres was understandably limited but two subjects in particular dominated the new medium, namely the Bible and pornography. The former lent respectability to an infant form much as the latter was bringing it into disrepute (1998, 115).

The Holy Bible was one of the first dramatic works adapted to the screen; it presented filmmakers with material that was not only popular but dignified (Marsh and Ortiz 1998, 115). For reasons different from those quoted above, Arcand brings pornography and religion unexpectedly together. In the preface to his book of the film-dialogue Arcand writes:

> I wanted to make a film of rupture, from madcap comedy to the most absurd drama, imaging the life around us, shattering, banal, contradictory. A bit like supermarkets where one can find in a ten metre space the novels of Dostoevsky, eaux de toilette, the Bible, pornographic videos, photographs of Earth taken from the moon, astrological predictions, and posters of actors and of Jesus, while the loudspeakers hum without end behind Pergolése, rock and roll or raucous voices' (1989b).[144]

Lloyd Baugh[145] describes *Jesus of Montreal* as a 'Jesus film' and such films, he states, oblige the film-maker to explore a series of decisions, choices and difficulties that are quite unprecedented in the history of cinema (1997, 3). For an ecocritical analysis, difficult decisions also need to be made in order to understand the deep structures (Pallister, 1995, 395) and many of the ambiguities such Jesus films present. Theologians are not in accord in the ways they present Christianity. Among other things it helps to know whether or not the film-maker, or film critic, is presenting a Christian, scientific, or subversive point of view, or no clear point of view at all; and whether the narratives and critiques are consistent. The choice of actors is important as well as the text. As Baugh notes, well known actors bring secular sub-texts to film which can affect the way texts are understood (1997, 27). This has additional validity when an actor plays Jesus. Although the actors in *Jesus of Montreal* may be known in Canada and elsewhere, they are not well known 'stars' brought into a film with the baggage of previous films accompanying them - to ensure box-office success - hence, many viewers have a view of the characters which is unaffected by previous roles the actors may have played.

In *Imaging the Divine* Baugh examines Jesus and Christ figures in film and provides a Jesuit theologian's background to *Jesus of Montreal* (Baugh 1997).[146] He outlines part of the film's story:

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[144] Tom O'Brien erroneously states that Daniel is the suicidal actor in the prologue; and translates Arcand incorrectly; 'archeological' should be 'astrological' (1990, 47). Translations from the French are provided by several critics and the sub-titles of the film.

[145] Baugh, Professor of Film Studies and Theology in Rome, is referred to several times in this chapter for his excellent theological study of *Jesus of Montreal* (1997).

[146] *Jesus of Montreal* is a film that Baugh highly respects amongst the 'Jesus films' he critiques, including two of several female 'Christ-figures': Babette in *Babette's Feast* and Jasmine in *Out of Rosenheim-Bagdad Cafe* (1997).

> Moving through an abridgement and rearrangement of the Gospel accounts, with ... a precedence given to Mark, this Jesus [of Montreal] works wonders: he walks on water, restores sight to a blind woman, raises the daughter of Jairus. He preaches strongly and convincingly to the people, at time violating the limits of dramatic allusion and talking directly to the audience, offering them bread. He forms a company of disciples who recognize him as the Messiah. He is condemned, scourged, crucified and dies (1997, 118).

The power of story is explicit in this film as Arcand's narrative and critique of Montreal society and its institutions simultaneously exposes the politics and power of stories in the making. The film provokes a questioning of our deepest understandings: beliefs and ideas about Jesus, God, Creation, evolution, and the mediated stories on which many of our ways of living are based. The complexities and frailties of egotistic individuals and inflated systems, as well as the institutions that support them, are probed by Arcand. His wry wit is exemplified as he sets himself up in the role of a judge who accepts a psychologist's report that Daniel (who is arrested and appears in court for the deliberate destruction of film equipment) is as sane, if not saner, than most judges.

Jesus of Montreal starts with the finale of a stage play by Dostoevsky (Baugh, 1997, 121). An actor, Pascal Berger, cries out at the betrayal of God, and the denial of life in the hereafter before he commits suicide:

> The idea that God is in the spirit of man must be destroyed. Otherwise each will know that he is mortal, without hope of resurrection and tranquility ... he is thirsty for death and nothingness (Arcand 1989b, 18).[147]

This prologue, with its archetypal theme of man's quest for

[147] Baugh holds the view that 'Christians die anew wherever an innocent woman or man dies because of human injustice or intolerance' (1997, 112).

immortality, prefigures themes in the film of death and deception, immortality and resurrection. Pascal becomes a media 'find' and the Dostoevsky play in which he performs is, for a short while, the production of the year, a 'must see'. He dies in the play to be reborn in *Jesus of Montreal*. The Passion Play becomes the next media discovery, the latest 'must', and the actor-director of the Play, Daniel, the new 'find' of the year. Declining the role offered to him by Daniel in the Passion Play Pascal gives up his artistic integrity in favour of advertising. This, Arcand infers, is part of the malaise and allegory for Montreal in the late twentieth century: the 'contrary pulls of crass commercialism and artistic *engagement* for contemporary actors' (Shek 1996 214); together with unemployment, alienation; hypocritical religious, legal and educational institutions. There are also the familiar (and therefore often unnoticed) signs of an urban environment - streets, highrise buildings, subways, all subsuming land and wildlife in insidious oxymoronic progress.

That Arcand's film succeeds is due in part to the way his contrasting presentations circle around humour, parody, artistic beauty and tragedy in the most unexpected ways. The film questions, and encourages the spectator to question, the meanings of death and resurrection - and in so doing, the meaning of life. But Arcand's is neither a clichéd nor a morbid questioning, in spite of the film's apocalyptic references. Puns, gags, jokes, and humour punctuate *Jesus of Montreal*. These and other subversive devices, noted by Baugh, cut and undercut the Passion Play so that we never see it in full. It is the story of Daniel, fully told, that takes precedence (Baugh 1997, 119-120).

> Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask *him to do* just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" For he knew that the chief priests had handed him over because of envy.
> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. And Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do *with him* whom you call the King of the Jews?" So they cried out again, "Crucify him!" (Mark 15:8).

The story of Jesus is of course well known; and therefore in Jesus films the conclusion is also well-known, 'there can be no surprises, no tension, and this is clearly a disadvantage in a medium like the cinema that requires a dramatic structure' (Baugh 1997, 3), but when the Passion Play is interrupted by a woman in the audience who calls out 'we want to know how it ends' (Arcand 1989b, 164), the viewer of the film finds that surprises and tension can and will occur - and that the story the woman is watching *is* a story different from previous Passion Plays.

Prior to their work on the Passion Play all the actors except Daniel have been attempting to support themselves during a time of obvious unemployment. Constance works in a soup kitchen feeding the elderly and the 'down and outs'. René is doing casual acting work and 'voice-overs'. Martin also, when first we see him, is dubbing for a pornographic movie. Daniel, emaciated and with a tragic air, has been travelling in India after successfully completing a Drama Honours study programme at the Conservatoire of Montreal.

Previously produced by Leclerc, the administrator of the shrine

for the last thirty-five years, the Passion Play, has become dated. Attendances are dropping. Yet Daniel's modernised Play is too radical for Leclerc, too realistic - especially when a Haitian girl,[148] a member of the audience, believes that Daniel *is* Jesus - and unacceptable to the church hierarchy because it goes beyond the boundaries of orthodox Christianity and the biblical canon of works. Daniel's version of the Passion denies the Virgin Birth and questions the Resurrection: the resurrected Jesus could be Everyman who, like Daniel, has the compassion and spirituality of Jesus within him.

When the Play is curtailed by police and security guards in the middle of a performance - in spite of its success and the hyperbole of reviewers, and the protests of the audience[149] - a melée ensues and Daniel, tied to the cross, is knocked to the ground and seriously hurt. There is no room for him at the General hospital (as there was not for Mary and Joseph at the inn), and very little in St. Mark's Hospital.[150] Daniel finally receives treatment at a Jewish hospital but too late. Thirty years of age, he dies. In a symbolic resurrection his organs are donated, giving new life and sight to the recipients.

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[148] Margaret Miles correctly observes that 'the only black woman in the film intervenes in the ... Play (just as the naive spectator did in the early days of film) and must be restrained' (1996, 43). The same is true in *The Piano* when the (naive) Maori of the audience interrupt the *Bluebeard* performance believing it to be real.

[149] The spectators respond favourably and protectively towards Daniel-Jesus. They do *not* yell 'crucify him, crucify him' as in the Gospel of Mark.

[150] A reference to the Gospel of Mark. As we have seen, Arcand based the Testament on the Gospel of Mark (Baugh 1997, 276 n.) The New Testament is based on the stories, letters and testaments of twenty seven men, which are believed to have been written more that thirty years after the death of Jesus. Some of them, the Apostles, claim to be eyewitnesses to Jesus's life, his death, and his ressurection. See John Shelby Spong's account of New Testament writings and inaccuracies (1998, 107-8).

As the actors' lives interweave with their performances through a sequence of parallels that develop through art and life (O'Brien 1990, 47) they change, becoming dedicated to their roles and becoming more like the characters they perform. 'It is not *a* story', one of the characters says at one point, 'it is *the* story'. But, as Tom O'Brien writes, it is very difficult to present the story freshly (1990, 47). When it is presented freshly, as it is in the Play, Leclerc and other church patriarchs are offended. An apt quotation, used by O'Brien for Arcand's replaying of the Jesus story, is from Coleridge: 'The best works of art don't tell new truths, but rescue old ones from "the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission"' (O'Brien 1990, 47).

During their performances of the Play the actors tell the audience the story of the historical Jesus. Through their research they have learnt that Jesus, son of a Roman soldier, was born in Egypt. By the order of Pontius Pilate, urged on by the High Priests, Jesus was executed on the cross. This was a time when crucifixions were regular occurrences, and when Jesus was not an unusual name. The Jesus who became known as Jesus Christ is believed to have died about the year 30, a time of tricksters and magicians, when miracles were daily events. At the time of Jesus' death nothing was written. It was not until decades after his death that his story was written down in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The actors' research also informs them that the scribes' attempts to literalise Jewish material brought inconsistencies. For the Jews, under attack from the Romans during and after the life of Jesus, the preservation of their sacred texts meant to them their survival as a nation. There was division between the

fundamentalists, who resisted any change to the Jewish Torah, and the Christian Jews, who echoed the heroic stories of the Jewish past to shape the biblical stories of Jesus.[151]

There are historical discrepancies in the film (Reinhartz 1998; Baugh, 1997, 276n.) as there are in the Gospels (Baugh 1997, 3). The ways in which Arcand depicts media personalities and interviewers is a comment in the film which indicates the unreliability of such commentators, and the vulnerability of memory in story-telling. They get their facts wrong - about the actors and the Play - and they embellish. Ironically, many critics also report *Jesus of Montreal* incorrectly. One refers to Constance instead of Mireille, and to Mireille instead of the advertising executive character, Denise Quintal (Pallister 1995, 388). Daniel's death place is reported to have taken place (a) on the cross, and (b) in the subway (Baugh 1997, 125,129), when clearly he dies in hospital.[152] Critics disagree about performance, finding the character of Daniel variously 'weak', a '*tour de force*' 'not sufficiently interiorized', 'internalized acting', 'a compelling presence', 'completely convincing' (Pallister, 1995, 394-5). Pallister, Professor Emeritus of Romance Languages and a film historian, also notes that audiences respond differently, with some people laughing unexpectedly (1995, 395). In *Seeing Is Believing* Margaret Miles notes the various responses of reviewers to the film, including those who saw it as: 'an entertaining satire about show business'; and 'as much about actors and media as it is about Christianity'; and one who stated that 'Jesus succeeds exactly where *The Last Temptation* failed - in its treatment of sex'. Miles

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[151] See Spong (1998, 39-59).

[152] With the complexity of the film and the interweaving of characters this is unsurprising, and I claim no immunity.

writes that other reviewers 'found it to be an attack on modern life'; 'something to believe in'; and, more unfavourably, that 'capitalism is nasty and that Christ was a closet Marxist' (Miles 1996, 40-41).

These comments diverge slightly from discussion of history, memory and embellishment, but they demonstrate - as Arcand does in the film when critiquing media characters - that recordings of events, and responses to events, sometimes are thoughtless copy-cat repetitions and that they frequently diverge; and that stories, particularly stories about Jesus, rarely seem to hold the same meaning for observers and viewers. Each brings with her or him their personal baggage.[153]

John Dominic Crossan, a biblical scholar specialising in the study of Jesus, discovered the unreliability of memory when he examined the reconstruction of earliest Christianity. He writes: '*Even if all history is story, not all story is history*' (1999, 20). Crossan defines history as: 'the past reconstructed interactively by the present through argued evidence in public discourse' (1999, 20). But what Crossan demonstrates is that it is very difficult to know what is history-story and what is story-story when there are always alternative perspectives. Not only do people remember events inaccurately, when told that an event actually happened they can believe that it happened. They embellish the happening, believing it all to be true. Crossan insists that the Jesus reconstruction, like all such reconstruction, is always creative, intercutting past and present (1999, 44). Because memory is unreliable, a method of

[153] As Barnes notes in Jesus at the Movies (1997, *passim*).

reconstruction which keeps the creative interaction of past and present as honest as possible is essential:

> A postmodern sensibility - that is, an equal awareness of your own and your subject's historicity - does not *preclude* but *demands* attention to method. As due-process keeps the legal interaction of defense and prosecution fair, so due-method keeps the historical interaction of past and present honest (Crossan 1999, 45).

Crossan writes that there is nothing in his own work that presumes that the historical Jesus or earliest Christianity is something you get once and for all, forever; and that this is not because Jesus and Christianity are special and unique: 'No past of continuing importance can ever avoid repeated reconstruction' (Crossan 1999, 45).[154] According to Crossan, over the past two hundred years of research scholars have learned that the *gospels* are exactly what they openly claim they are, not history, not biography (although both are present), 'but gospel - that is, good news'. The gospels are written for faith, to faith, and from faith (1999, 21):

> If Jesus is but a figure like Zeus, historical reconstruction is quite obviously absurd. If Jesus is but a figure like Hamlet, historical reconstruction is equally absurd. The former lives in myth, the latter only in literature (Crossan 1999, 26).

Jesus lives in both myth and literature, but he is also a known historical character (Crossan 1999, 26-27), as the actors in *Jesus of Montreal* discover through their archeological and historical research. The story of Jesus that the actors tell is one of many stories within the film that is part of continuing enquiry and

[154] The Bible and New Testament stories have also survived changes. With the persecution of the reformers under Queen Mary the new translators were either executed ... or fled to the continent. Earlier, during the fifteenth century, there had been other persecutions and versions of the Bible were suppressed. The Bible was considered to be of such a dangerous and incendiary character that long after the invention of printing no translation into the vernacular was permitted. A law was passed that 'no women (unless she be noble or gentle woman), no artificers, apprentices, serving men under the degree of yeoman ... husbandmen, or labourers' be allowed to peruse this radical literature (Bates no year, 1232).

conversation, involving history, archeology, biography, and fiction. The theory of reception-history,[155] like reception theory generally, allows for the reconstruction of texts over time but also requires the method, upon method, upon method that Crossan demands for an honest reconstruction (1991, 26-7). To say that Jesus is divine or Son of God is, Crossan believes, theologically beyond historical proof or disproof. It is a matter of faith, 'the theologically based interpretation of history's meaning'. But, Crossan continues: 'to say that Jesus had no earthly father and that Mary conceived him virginally is an historical statement open, in principle, to proof or disproof' (1999, 27).

The actors discover that the ancient Jews identify Jesus as the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier, Panthera. The Play also suggests that texts exist that substantiate the identification of Jesus as Yeshu ben Panthera.[156] To viewers (like myself) unversed in life-of-Jesus research, the identification of Jesus as the son of a soldier suggests historical fact which indeed subverts the tradition of the Passion Play. Even though Arcand's techniques of exposure and demythologising are cautionary, this merging of fact and fiction, or the merging of texts, becomes problematic, particularly when, with Crossan's assistance, we have come to understand the unreliability of memory and that when a story is repeated enough we may come to think of it as true.

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[155] Reception-history, as a component of *Reader-Response* theory, is a mode of study that transforms the history of literature - which has been traditionally conceived as an account of the production, in the course of time, of a variety of texts with fixed meanings and values - by making it instead the history of the changing and accumulative way that selected major works [such as he Bible] are interpreted and assessed, as the horizons of its successive readers change (Abrams 1981, 155).

[156] Adele Reinhartz writes that this latter detail might suggest that this identification is an accepted historical fact rather than the anti-Christian polemic of rabbinic literature of some 1500 years ago (1988 np).

History, Gospel, and Play become blurred with one viewing of the film. Yet, as far as the more constant, and therefore more discerning viewer is concerned, discrepancies between Daniel's Play and the Gospels may exist because the research is the actors' work, even though the research is most likely that of Arcand's production team. Baugh quotes Marc Gervais who insists that '"Arcand makes it clear that Daniel is not posing as an expert, "so why should his research be faultless?"' (cited in Baugh 1997, 276).

Baugh recognises Arcand's subversions in the Play as a 'demythologizing text radically different to the previous one' which casts doubt on the divine origin of Jesus and therefore on his divinity. 'By making Jesus the son of a Roman soldier the Play shifts around events from the Gospel tradition and in the end seems to skirt the question of Jesus's bodily resurrection' (1997, 113,120-121). Baugh writes:

> Daniel-Arcand presents as fact based on new "discoveries" and "computor assisted textual analysis" (Arcand 35) that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier, for which the actual evidence is extremely tenuous. He places the beginning of the written tradition at one hundred years after his death ... when biblical scholarship agrees overwhelmingly that Mark's Gospel was written thirty to thirty five years after Jesus died. His offhand comments that disciples writing about their leader after his death "lie, embellish" ... fly in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, evidence available to anyone who reads the Bible, even superficially. ... I would like to suggest precisely that as a possibility, that is one more element subverting the passion play. In that case, it would become a question of the limited research of Daniel, not of Arcand (Baugh, 1997, 276n).[157]

The New Story

[157] This view is contrary to that of Crossan, who, as stated previously, accepts that there could be faulty memory or embellishments within the Gospels.

Early in the film a wide screen film version of the 'big bang' or, as Thomas Berry describes it, 'the primordial flaring forth' (1994, 17), is observed by Daniel, Constance, and Mireille, whilst it is being narrated by René. The three stand silhouetted between the projector and the screen, thereby becoming part of the explosive story they are observing. This suggests that their thoughts and actions are contributing to an evolutionary world and a world of collective consciousness, that they are 'players' in the world. The film (within the film) contrasts evolutionary theory with the Church's view of Creation in 'Genesis' and provides the background tension between the two major stories that shape our culture, one scientific, the other mystical.

René narrates the 'big bang' theory: that approximately 15,000 million years ago all the matter of the Universe, packed into a small superdense mass, was hurled in all directions by a cataclysmic explosion. The film shows fragments slowing down as the galaxies and stars are created as part of a still expanding Universe. A projectionist says the production is a collation of stories - a popularised version of scientific facts. He asks the question: will the evolutionary story of the beginning of the world be the same five years from now? Is one theory any more reliable than any other? There is much that is unknown, he says, much that is mysterious.

Cosmologists agree that much is mysterious. In 1996, seven years after the release of *Jesus of Montreal*, journalist Gabrielle Walker interviewed several cosmologists for *New Scientist* to find out whether or not they believed the Universe began with a 'big bang'.

They did not all agree. British cosmologist Fred Hoyle said that the Universe did not start: 'It's infinite'. Steven Weinberg, Nobel prizewinning particle physicist from the University of Texas said that it is 'an open question'; Paul Steinhardt from Pennsylvania State University, co-developer in the 1980s of a key theory about the early Universe said, 'it's up in the air'. Alexander Vilenkin of Tufts University, Massachusetts, stated that the Universe must have had a beginning. The standard 'big bang' model is agreed said Oxford mathematician Roger Penrose. Everything else is 'embellishments and flights of fancy' (Walker 1996, 34).

Per Bak, also writing for *New Scientist* (10 October, 1998, 47), gathered together scientific versions of the story of life's beginnings. He discovered that life is believed to have begun either in the sea; or deep inside the earth; or in a primordial soup somewhere on the earth's surface; or from space as viable microbes. The physicist Paul Davies agrees with the 'big bang' hypothesis. He further surmises that life may have started after the huge bombardment that afflicted Earth in the first seven hundred million years of its history, not in Darwin's primeval soupy pool but in a sub-surface niche at least a kilometre beneath the surface, possibly on the seabed, but more likely in the porous rock beneath it. But as Davies says, 'we cannot be sure that this was the case' (1998, 14-20).

In *The Sea Around Us* (1965), Carson tells her creation story: 'how young planet Earth acquired an ocean':

> [t]he new earth, freshly torn from its parent sun, was a ball of whirling gases, intensely hot, rushing through the black spaces of the universe on a path and at a speed controlled by immense forces. Gradually the ball of flaming gases cooled. The gases began to liquify, and Earth became a molten mass. The materials of this mass eventually

> became sorted out in a definite pattern: the heaviest in the centre, the less heavy surrounding them, and the least heavy forming the outer rim. This is the pattern which persists today - a central sphere of molten iron, very nearly as hot as it was two billion years ago, an intermediate sphere of semi-plastic basalt, and a hard outer shell, relatively thin and composed of solid basalt and granite (1965, 14).

Charlene Spretnak calls her story of the Universe a most extraordinary mythic drama which started fifteen billion years ago:

> our universe was born in a vast and mysterious eruption of being. Out of the fireball came all the elementary particles of the cosmos, including those that later formed our home galaxy, the Milky Way, and our planetary home, the Earth. All the land, the waters, the animals, the plants, our bodies, the moon, the stars - everything in our life experience - is kin to us, the result of a cosmic birth during which the gravitational power of the event held the newborn particles in a miraculously deft embrace (1997, 182).

Spretnak goes on to say: 'In the midst of all this action, in the unspeakable beauty of the Garden Planet, the story of every person unfolds, nestled within the embedding stories of family, clan, community, bioregion, region, nation, continent, planet, and cosmos' (1997, 183).

The 'new' (almost one and a half centuries old), and still developing, evolutionary story poetically described by Carson and Spretnak, has not yet been fully absorbed into the consciousness and imagination of most of the Western world's population, in the way that the biblical Creation story has.[158] Biblical stories, with their telling and retelling over nearly two thousand years, continue to be interpreted literally and powerfully as the 'Gospel truth', providing hope for the faithful. There have been attempts by biblical

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[158] Margaret Wertheim reports that polls show that over 95 per cent of Americans 'believe in God or a universal spirit', yet at the same time, the US remains a world leader in scientific research' (Wertheim 1999, 40-42).

fundamentalists to ban the teaching of evolution in American public schools. These attempts, according to Gould, have now extended over more than 'seventy contentious years', with the fundamentalists' demand for at least equal time for creationism on a literal time scale (with an earth no more than ten thousand years old) in any classroom that also provides instruction about evolution (Gould 1999, 123-124).[159]

A Den of Thieves: Advertising and the Law

> So they came to Jerusalem. And Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of those that sold doves. And he would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then he taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, *'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'*? But you have made it *'a den of thieves'*" (Mark 11:15-17).[160]

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[159] The question, 'Should Creationism Still Be Taught?' (Archer, 1997, 18), has been debated in schools and in the courts. If it is taught side by side with evolution will the students simply become confused? Is Creationism 'bad science', 'bad religion'? According to Michael Archer, a professor of biology at the University of New South Wales, the geologist, Professor Ian Plimer, of Melbourne University, in his protest against the teaching of creation as a science, has 'pursued creationists into public lectures and through any available medium ... challenging every tenet the movement holds dear'. As Archer reports, there is an overwhelming weight of evidence suporting evolutionary theory, not as fact, but as a developing theory. In scientific circles, as the article states: 'few question that evolution fits the known facts of biology, geology, and astronomy better than any other model'. Creationists have failed to win court cases in the United States but this does not mean [the article states] that there is not considerable support for creationist views. According to a Australian National Church Life Survey which polled Protestant churchgoers, fundamentalists were found to be dominant. 51% of respondents believed in a literal interpretation of biblical creation. Only 10% accepted evolutionary theory and thought the biblical account was largely symbolic. After ten years of surveys, Archer found that 10-15% of his first year biology students believe that God created people pretty much in their present form at some time within the last 10,000 years. Rhondda Jones, in 1986, surveyed around 600 students entering James Cook University, Townsville, and found that around 25% of students had been taught both creationism and evolution, and that they were twice as likely to contradict themselves as were other students in response to the survey's questions relating to life and their beliefs. There are Christian religious leaders, however, who believe that the teaching of the creation story as science is both bad science and bad religion (Archer, 1997, 18 - 21).

[160] New Testament quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from 'The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version,' (1995).

Men and women who support the flawed institutions and faculties of the Church, Advertising, Law, Education, and Medicine[161] are ridiculed and subverted in *Jesus of Montreal* as their sexism, hypocrisy, prejudice, consumerism, and opportunism is exposed. Advertising moguls are particularly critiqued - both female and male are singled out for criticism as they demean those in their pay and control. These executives hold the financial power to supply much needed employment, not in the production of basic needs, but for products such as beer and perfume. They are 'the thieves' who parasitically profit from their clients' enterprises whilst exploiting the young and the unemployed.

The actors discover that many of the injustices against Jesus continue in their time, their lives. Power is used by various means to maintain the *status quo* of Montreal institutions, the institutions which perform with their own 'gods', within their own theatres, studios, and courts. Pascal becomes a god of theatre and advertising, even though he also symbolises Judas, and his head (on the billboard) is a reminder of his betrayal (of Daniel) and the decapitated John the Baptist. A media personality calls out 'My God!' after his performance. Both recipients of Daniel's heart and eyes respond to the surgeon - as if he is God. The muffled word first spoken by the man given sight *is* 'God!' 'Miracles' are performed in Daniel's Passion Play as the sick are healed by Jesus; this time the god of miracles is a surgeon, but even he cannot save Daniel. Arcand, as well as having authority in the film as a judge, as director judges and decides, like Pontius Pilate, who shall live and who shall die in his film. In his omnipresence he also performs

[161] Upper-case letters are used when referring to institutions.

as a god.[162]

Mireille Fontaine, the most vulnerable of the actors because her change of lifestyle is so great, is first introduced to the viewer near a *fountain.* A flimsily draped sex goddess, she walks on water (as Jesus does in a later scene) when she performs in a television commercial for a perfume. The Advertising Agency executives appropriate the title of Milan Kundera's book, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Lightness of being, the film suggests, is what advertising, its producers and its promoters, represent as they devalue literature, and the spirit and quality of individuals and their work. Mireille, prior to meeting Daniel, lived with her advertising art-director boyfriend Jerzy Streliski. Streliski and the female advertising account executive tell Mireille to expose her body for the clients when she auditions for work in the film commercial for beer. Bodily exposure does not have the same meaning for Mireille and Daniel. *'Je suis habitue'* (I am accustomed to it) she says. Daniel, refusing to accept sexist behaviour, wrecks the television studio.[163] 'You are better than that', he says. On this occasion Arcand speaks for women generally, as he demonstrates the manner in which women are humiliated and demeaned, particularly in the advertising industry. When Daniel passionately rebels against Mireille's treatment, destroying studio cameras and equipment, he causes Streliski, the producer, and the clients to flee, an act which parallels the biblical cleansing of the temple. Mireille's lawyer friend, Richard Cardinal, offers

[162] According to Miles several reviewers saw the transplants at the conclusion of the film as a 'cheap shot' in an exploration of eternal life, one lacking the 'verve' of many horror films (1996, 44).

[163] The suggestion of love between Christ and Mary Magdalene was celebrated by the Gnostics in the second century. The apocryphal *Gospel of Mary* portrays her as supreme initiate into Christ's mysteries and the teacher of the other apostles (Pagels 1990, 84).

to defend Daniel but he refuses. For his actions, and his decision not to accept a lawyer, or to defend himself, Daniel is committed by the court for a psychiatric report and then released.

An analogy between Mary Magdelene and Mireille is implicit through the advertising work that Mireille does, and her relationship with Streliski in which she 'prostitutes' herself. As Marina Warner writes:

> Saint Mary Magdalene together with the Virgin Mary, typifies Christian society's attitudes to women and sex. Both female figures are perceived in sexual terms: Mary as Virgin and Mary Magdalene as a whore - until her repentance. The Magdalene, like Eve, was brought into existence by the powerful undertow of misogyny in Christianity, which associates women with the dangers and degradation of the flesh (Warner 1983, 225).
>
> Above all others, Mary Magdalene is the prototype of the penitent whore, but she has colleagues in this particular hagiography, which so neatly condenses Christianity's fear of women, its identification of physical beauty with temptation and its practise of bodily mortification (Warner 1983, 232).
>
> Together, the Virgin and the Magdalene form a diptych of Christian patriarchs' idea of woman. There is no place in the conceptual architecture of Christian society for a single woman who is neither a virgin nor a whore. Indeed in Catholic countries the unmarried woman who has not taken the veil is a pathetic figure of fun - the *zitella*, the old maid ridiculed in popular Italian songs. The Church venerates two ideals of the feminine - consecrated chastity in the Virgin Mary and regenerate sexuality in the Magdalene. Populous as the Catholic pantheon is, it is nevertheless so impoverished that it cannot conceive of a single female saint independently of her relations with men (Warner 1983, 235).

Arcand, however, subverts this Catholic imagery of whoredom for Mary Magdalene. Mireille demonstrates that she *is* better than the role Streliski imposed upon her. 'Your talent is all in your ass' he tells her. For characters like Mireille who seek work in advertising the right kind of face and body has to be young,

glamourous and made-up for contemporary story-telling. The woman becomes the 'product' of advertising. As Mireille's strength of character develops through the film she leaves off her make-up and her advertising persona. It is Mireille who upholds Daniel's and Jesus's values when she resists the offer (temptation) of work in the Daniel Coulombe Theatre proposed by the satanic lawyer character, Cardinal, after Daniel's death.

Sexism in the film is not solely a masculine trait, however. Denise Quintal - who works with Streliski in the production of the perfume commercial and the beer commercial audition in which Mireille performs - is as predatory and sexist as her male colleagues and insulting to the actors with whom she works. 'Bank on your bikini, not your voice' she says to one of the young singer-actresses. She seduces Pascal, Daniel's acclaimed and handsome actor friend. Like Herodias's daughter, Salome, who demanded the head of John the Baptist (Mark 6:22-29), she wants his head.[164] Her colleague, Cardinal, who is with her in the audience of the Dostoevsky play in the film's prologue, sardonically replies, 'his head?' It is Pascal's head that appears on the billboard advertising '*L'homme sauvage* (the wild man) - a cologne for men'. This is an irony, for Pascal is not wild but trapped for all to see. His artistic integrity is lost. Instead of joining Daniel when invited, and continuing in his acting profession, Pascal succumbs to the temptations of advertising, which presumably pays more. Quintal gains Pascal's body as well as his head as he becomes a Judas to commercialism.[165]

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[164] The associations of Pascal with John the Baptist and with Quintal, the advertising character who wants his head present ambiguous imagery of a Judas and a martyr. Pallister notes Pascal's surname, 'Berger', associating it with 'shepherd', lambs being associated with John the Baptist, who, she says, 'is not unlike the Pascal lamb Jesus, through his martydom'. (Pallister also points out that the 'Quebeckers have a special devotion to him,' the fete of Saint John being Quebec's national holiday) (1995, 386).

Arcand ceaselessly jibes at the media and advertising. In the film, the media critics who have viewed the same performance of the Passion Play all rave about it as the coup of the year, the 'must see', but, as mentioned before, each presenter remembers it differently and inaccurately. A television reviewer of the Play smiles absurdly as she turns from the wrong camera to another until her smile becomes a grimace. The smile is not genuine, just another deception, another simulation. In another layering of film, television monitors show presenters delivering their conflicting versions of the Play. A radio 'personality' becomes ghoulishly predatory after Daniel's death when she is investigating Daniel's life: '... did he travel? India? Nepal? Ah, a spiritual journey!' This same personality has missed the irony of her responses when immediately after the prologue and the Passion Play, with tears in her eyes, she calls out, 'My God!'. Characteristic fickleness is made explicit when three media personalities make precisely the same gestures and the same comments after the Play as they have to Pascal after his performance in the prologue play (Baugh 1997, 121).

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[165] As Miles notes, the treatment of gender is complex. Sexism is presented explicitly as a deplorable feature of consumerism yet this message is undermined by other filmic moments such as the gratuitous shot of Mireille's breasts. When Constance explains why she sleeps with the priest she says: 'It gives him so much pleasure, and me so little pain' and this, Miles writes, 'is a classic statement of the sexually passive, eager-to-please woman, not acting on any desires of her own ... text and sub-text conflict - reflecting a historical moment in which gender roles have been called into question and are heavily contested, creating social anxiety, but without resolution' (1996, 43-44).

Pornography, the Church, Education, and Medicine

> ... he [Jesus] rebuked Peter, saying:
> Get you behind me Satan!
> For you are not mindful of the things of God,
> but the things of men (Mark 9:33).

The sex industry is also ridiculed by Arcand early in the film when Daniel arrives with Constance to enlist Martin (Durocher) in the Play.[166] Unexpectedly they find him involved in a pornographic film production session. They wait and watch while Martin is in the (hilarious) process of synchronising his voice with a film of a couple simulating copulation whilst eating a doughnut. Grunting and panting, he attempts to emulate sexual excitement whilst playing two, then three, men. Titillation, an aim of pornography, is subverted when the process of simulation is exposed with such humour.

Education has its own hypocrisies and temptations and is complicit with the Church in suppressing new evidence of the life of Jesus in archeological findings. An academic secretly meets Daniel in a carpark to give him research papers that throw a new light on biblical texts. The professor's faculty of theology is funded by the archdiocese patriarchs who consider the new findings heresy; therefore, they have been kept secret. The professor is prevented from speaking out. He is not telling students the truth as he knows it. Education is demonstrated to be as flawed an institution as the Church.[167] The professor tells Daniel that in order to keep his job he continues to teach the Church's orthodox story. Naivety and

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[166] Durocher means literally 'of the rock' - and so Martin is linked with Peter of the New Testament (Baugh, 1997, 124). Martin will later betray Daniel by succumbing to the lawyer's tempting offer: the establishment of a theatre in memory of Daniel.

gullibility are counteracted by Arcand as viewers of *Jesus of Montreal* are constantly reminded of embellishments, suppressions and exclusions, as well as the blending of fact and fiction. Again, this is Arcand's technique, his exposure of the construction of stories and his play of story within story.

Advertising and Law, as well as pornography, are where the money and the action are, but the institution of Medicine, like Education, is not without its temptations. The director portrays with a condemning eye the crowded hospital to which Daniel is taken. The scene epitomises the stress and breakdown of society as people, including Daniel, are left to wait in corridors while overworked staff, burdened with bureaucratic procedures, attempt to care for patients, some of them dying. The hospital is hopelessly and tragically crowded and inefficient, unlike the Jewish hospital where he is finally taken.[168] A failing medical programme and declining social services are symptomatic of governmental failure to cope with population pressures and the breakdown of environmental protection, as well as an obvious growing gap between the rich and the poor and private and public institutions. Part of the malaise of Montreal society, from Arcand's perspective, seems to be that anything and everything - including 'bodies' and 'heads' - can be

[167] An example of the suppression of texts is the withholding of the Nag Hammadi texts commented on by Elaine Pagels, and Professor Hans Jonas, the pre-eminent authorities on gnosticism. Jonas wrote in 1962: 'Unlike the Dead Sea finds of the same years, the gnostic find from Nag Hammadi has been beset by a persistent curse of political roadblocks, litigations, and, most of all, scholarly jealousies and "firstmanship" (the last factor has grown by now into a veritable *chronique scandaleuse* of contemporay academia)' (cited in Pagels 1990, 22).

[168] Adele Reinhartz writes that Jesus of Montreal actively portrays Jews in a positive way when these two hospitals are contrasted. 'Contributing to this point is the visual detail of the Star of David on the uniforms of the hospital workers which subtly evoke the Jewish badge worn by Jewish residents of the ghetto and concentration camps of the Nazi regime ... to Montrealers, however, the [hospital] scene is a source of some humour; it seems that the real Jewish General is not nearly so serene and uncrowded as its portrayal in this scene' (1998, np).

bought and sold. The surgeon who battles to save Daniel's life is paradoxically saviour and predator. There is a devilish aspect to him when he whispers to Constance, *give me his body;* yet he is god-like when he later removes Daniel's heart and eyes so that a man can live and a woman can see.

Temptation

> And behold, a certain lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher", he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life? (10:25)

Cardinal represents the business of charity. He, like the 'lawyer' of the New Testament, tests Jesus to see if he is corruptible. He is a satanic 'performer', an 'anti-Christ', whose work is no longer in law. He represents 'personalities', those who have an image that is suitable for advertising or PR purposes. 'Jesus Christ is an extremely fashionable personality these days', he says (Arcand 1989b, 143). Daniel's image would be ideal for the lawyer's entrepreneurial purposes. Oxfam and UNICEF are clients he proposes for Daniel's entrée into commercialism.

In several scenes Arcand brings to the screen over-consuming urban elites, for example, in the high-rise restaurant to which Cardinal, invites his clients, including his intended client, Daniel. Menus includes sophisticated mixes of Virgin Marys, Lobster Magdalene, and other punning temptations. This salubrious environment contrasts with scenes in which unemployed seek money, work and food; and the poor and suffering attempt to get care and treatment in hospital. Men who are obviously successful clients are greeted as friends by the lawyer as they pass by. The girl on Cardinal's arm has already been seduced - and 'only seventeen' he

chauvinistically and proudly announces; but as Miles writes, 'the temptation that Daniel faces is deceit and power, greed and celebrity, not sex. In *Jesus of Montreal*, sex is not absent, but it is absent from the screen' (1996, 41).

As Baugh points out, the lawyer's name is a play on 'rich cardinal', 'a not so subtle dig at the [wealthy] Roman Catholic hierarchy, all the tougher when the true [Satanic] 'identity' of the lawyer is revealed' (1997, 277n). Arcand goes further with subversive and anti-Catholic allusions. The Cardinal is second in hierarchy to the Pope, which links the lawyer and law with the Church and corruption.

Mireille is tempted by Cardinal's *savoir faire*. She asks a favour for Daniel: that the lawyer should represent Daniel in court, but, as mentioned previously, Daniel refuses the offer. Cardinal again tries to tempt Mireille, after Daniel's death, when she is at her most vulnerable. Unlike the other actors, she resists his proposition: that they institutionalise Daniel (as the Church has institutionalised Jesus) by setting up a Theatre as a memorial to him. They would all have work. Again, from the lawyer's perspective, everything, including 'bodies' and 'heads', can be bought and sold.

Love Thy Neighbour

In a television interview Arcand stated:

> Although I am not religious, I still think that Jesus' message 'Love thy neighbour' is the most profound of all the philosophies, more than the Buddha, Socrates, Zen, Mohammed. If I had to pick any religion's core that touches me, these would be the words. It doesn't

make me a Catholic, but it still touches me (Arcand WWW 2000). [169]

The loving of neighbours is acted out particularly in the character of Constance (Lazure), whose name denotes her constancy and, literally, 'the light'. Before renewing her friendship with Daniel, Constance, like the other actors, needed employment. Acting possibilities are limited. In the soup kitchen where she worked before joining Daniel, Constance felt that she could work for the good of others and feel at peace with herself. Constance is constant to her neighbour (with whom she shares childcare), her daughter and friends. She provides a loving home for Daniel and the other actors and a bed and a home to Leclerc, whose work in the Church entails preaching that extra-marital sex is a sin. Pledged to sexual abstinence and yet in a liaison with Constance, Leclerc is a hypocrite who refuses to recognise truth. He personifies the corruption and hypocrisy of institutionalised religion that the actors' research and acting exposes. His hypocrisy supplies delusion to other cripples needing the support of the Church with its outdated beliefs and ambiguities. Leclerc insists at one point in the film, 'you can make the Gospels say whatever you want. I know, from experience' (Arcand 1989b, 113). Moreover, he lacks the courage to take up Constance's offer of a new, but worldly life, with less of the comforts and riches that the Church provides.

The actors learn to take care of each other as they face growing opposition from Leclerc and the Church patriarchs. Through their

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[169] On another occasion Arcand stated: 'There will always be a yearning for that time in my life when religion provided soothing answer to problems to which there were no answers. To this day I cannot help but be moved when I hear: "Where your treasure is, here your heart is also", or, "If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that?" Through the thick haze of the past comes the echo of a deeply disturbing voice' (cited in Miles, 1996, 41).

research, their performances, and the interaction they have with each other and with those with whom they come in contact, they develop strengths which enable them to persevere when they encounter the full weight of institutionalised oppression.

When Leclerc attempts to regain control of the Play, during Daniel's temporary confinement for breaking up the film studio and its equipment, the actors parody Leclerc's out of date direction with method acting. In front of the statue of the crucified Jesus in the shrine grounds, they mock his request for a return to his own scripting and conceptions of acting. The actors are irrepressible in their buffoonery, especially when they can see in front of them what Leclerc does not, that Daniel has returned and has become part of the joke. In mock *hari-kari* (the end) Daniel collapses behind Leclerc.

A guard in the shrine attempts to stop the actors from passing through the church to perform in the church gardens. He says: '*vous n'est pas chez vous ici! Vous n'avez pas le droit* (this is not your home here, you have no right). But of course the actors do have a right to be in a Christian church, for no-one needy or seeking truth should be excluded. Jesus's charter is specifically to care for the rejected and the down-trodden. According to Michael B. Kelly it was because of the company Jesus kept that the religious establishment was always attacking him. One of the most graphic ways Jesus lived out his ministry was to invite people to his table to eat. Kelly writes:

> Jesus ate with the learned, the religious, the upper class, the rich, the poor, the prostitutes, the homeless, and especially the ritually unclean - those who were refused full participation in the religious life of

their society because they were seen as impure, chronically sinful, spiritually inferior (cited in Murray 1998, 13).

Even today, people are at times excluded from the Catholic Church as if they have no right to be there; and women, whilst the most visible lay component of the Catholic Church, are still excluded from the Ministry. Arcand recognises that the love and neighbourliness for all, that one should expect from Church authorities, seems to be lacking.[170]

Hypocrites and Good Samaritans

During his performance as Jesus, Daniel states what he also believes when he castigates senior church officials for their hubris and wealth: 'Do not ever insist on being called "Rabbi" or "Reverend Father", or '"Monseignor" or "Your Eminence"' (Arcand 1989b, 132). Daniel's portrayal of a compassionate and healing Jesus has too real a quality. He is treated as the living Messiah by a member of the audience; others take bread from his hands and listen to the wisdom of his words.

All this is too unorthodox for the Church authorities. Leclerc believes that the yearly Montreal performances strengthen the biblical canonical texts but *not* if there is radical change in the story. He has previously admitted that he has been responsible for its production 35 years, and that the Play needs revitalisation, and also that audiences had been declining under his direction. However he is too cowardly to authorise either the Play's

[170] In 'Should the Church Discriminate?' James Murray, the writer of the article, discusses with Michael B. Kelly, the refusal of Archbishop George Pell (Melbourne) to give communion to worshippers who declare themselves as gay (Murray, 1998, 13). In 'Unholy Alliance' Murray and Tim Pegler further report the reaction to Pell's refusal to give communion to homosexuals which, they say, points to an unofficial schism within the Catholic Church (Murray and Pegler, 1998, 24).

continuance or its curtailment. He tries to keep the actors out of the church grounds, and instigates the stopping of the Play by calling in his superiors. Leclerc fails to support the actors even when challenged by Constance. Baugh writes that Leclerc 'seems to want to substitute the radical, dynamic truth of Jesus Christ with a false Christ who offers easy comfort' (1997, 117). Leclerc has been in the ministry since he was nineteen. It was an escape from poverty. He says he is an old man, there is no new beginning outside the church for a 'cripple' - but as Constance reminds him, he is not too old to make love.

Leclerc and the Church patriarchs are perhaps jealous, protective of their dogma; protective too of their positions, just as the High Priest in the Play is protective of his position when he insists that Pontius Pilate should order the execution of Jesus - to set an example and to remind people of the power of Rome. To tell the story differently, accepting contemporary understandings of the life and times of Jesus, would mean Leclerc's excommunication from the church. He cannot leave, because, as he says, he has been in the Church too long. The priesthood, although not his true calling, is a position that gives him security from the poverty he fears. He wanted to be an actor but he can still perform - from a pulpit. And how will his congregation live without the crutches that support them, Leclerc asks Daniel. Leclerc represents and defends a conservative, institutional, traditional religion against Daniel's revisionist theological agenda (Miles 1996, 42).

Contrasting with the profit makers and hypocrites that Arcand parodies are the 'Good Samaritans' in the film: the ambulance

drivers who try to save Daniel's life, and the singers who bring beauty and lyricism with them while trying to make a living in any way they can without prostituting themselves. The singers are present during the audition for the beer commercial but seem untainted by their environment - and they have to eat. There is no interest shown in artistic talent. In the subway the singers busk in front of *L'homme sauvage* billboard. Their voices echo in the church at the start of the film and it is their voices singing the last duo of *Stabat Mater* of Pergolése that we hear as Mireille walks the mountain top at dawn: '*Quand mon corps mourra, Fais qu'a mon ame ne soit pas refusee La Gloire du paradis* (Arcand 1989b, 188):

> When my body dies,
> Grant that my soul not be denied,
> The glory of Paradise.
> Amen (translation Baugh 1997, 129)

Whether these words are a final irony or not - contradicting Arcand's this-worldly presentation of Daniel as Jesus - is, for me, uncertain. More likely it is another juxtaposition: of faith and the spiritual placed side by side with the realm of science and the physical. Irony is difficult to equate with such beauty, even in a film that has satire and irony in plenty. Arcand shows sincere respect for Jesus the man and his sayings - if not the institution of the Catholic Church - as is evident in the characterisation of Daniel and Daniel as Jesus; particularly when Daniel says to the psychologist who attempts to analyse the reason for his violence in the auditioning studio, 'Playing Jesus ... is anything but shabby' (Arcand 1989b, 139).[171]

Important for Daniel, and Mireille in particular, and consequently for Arcand's film, hope is in *this* world - and a woman - not an otherworldly Paradise overseen by a patriarch. The light of dawn breaking over the city, together with the music, backgrounds Mireille in a scene where disappointment and sadness is followed by gentle optimism as Mireille leaves the other actors and the lawyer for a new, but unknown, life. The camera focuses on Mireille preparing to face this new life, without make-up and without Daniel, the man she has loved.[172] The dawn brings light to Montreal and Mireille as the exquisite sound of the female singers accompanies her. Even as the girls sing to a recording while busking in the subway in front of the billboard there is integrity and purity in their voices. *They* do not sell out. Where there is music, art, and love, there is hope.

Mise en scene

The changes to various locations of *Jesus of Montreal* are subtle, and though covert, they are important contributions to the story. In the Montreal of the film, space has become city. Only vestiges of the wild remain on the mountain shrine. From the shrine there is a widespread city view with skyscrapers intruding on the skyline; but at other sites where the action takes place there are glimpses of a river, trees, and grass. In the restaurant-temptation scene where Cardinal and Daniel are viewed close-up at the window

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[171] Baugh writes that the Play is taken seriously by the media people (1997, 119) which it is - for a while - but there is a bite to Arcand's presentation as it is impossible for the viewer to take the media seriously when nothing is serious to them for long.

[172] Because of the support from her actor friends, Mireille is able to walk away from the degrading relationship she has been in with Streliski, as well as the sexual exploitation she has been exposed to in her work. She is able to face herself in the mirror without the cosmetics that had been essential to her sense of well-being.

of a restaurant in a high-rise building, the camera then zooms to the street. Nothing grows. Nothing living can be seen, only cars and concrete, and other high-rise buildings. 'This city is yours if you want it', Cardinal says to Daniel (Arcand 1997, 145), totally misunderstanding Daniel and his values.

The subway, where Daniel collapses after his apocalyptic delirious ravings, is a wasteland, like the view from the restaurant window, where nothing grows - a reminder of a mythical world in which the king is sick. Only when there is compassion again in the world can there be healing.[173] Trains (symbolic of life) travel backwards and forwards, entering and exiting tunnels (symbols of death), their destinations unclear.

In *Jesus of Montreal* there are not grand scenes of mountain and river, inserted in order to indicate God's greatness, which could risk overcoming the actors' performances.[174] Instead there are muted backgrounds speaking a subtle language of light and landscape. Light comes and goes as the story of Jesus is enacted, beginning with rays streaming down from stained-glass church windows onto two young female singers. City lights later illuminate the distant background. The moon, the rising sun, stars, the weather and the general ambience, reflect actions and moods of the actors. When the Play goes underground, after Daniel-Jesus has been crucified, there is darkness. The dawning of a new day,

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[173] According to the Grail Legends, only when there is true compassion for the king's wound, and the right question is asked, can there be healing and fertility (Gardner 1996, 297-301).

[174] In *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, Baugh observes the inappropriateness of scenes chosen by the director, set in Utah and Colorado, that were 'impressive, too impressive' with 'the vast Grand Canyon, the churning Colorado river, dramatic gulches, buttes; the whole amplified by magnificent sunrises and sunsets and by exceptionally blue skies with fluffy white clouds, all photographed in wide-screen Technicolor' (Baugh 1997, 27).

after his death, indicates hope. In a scene where Mireille opens the subway tunnel gates and runs towards the other actors with the news that 'the Lord is back', she is brilliantly backlit.

At the end of the film, after Daniel's death, Leclerc, living his comfortable life, and denying Daniel as well as the crucified Jesus, closes his windows against the storm. Mireille and Constance, rain-soaked, mourn as they walk the streets. The two singers whom we have seen in the church at the start of the film busk[175] at the spot where Daniel collapsed in the subway.[176] Their voices soar and gradually fade away as the camera rises, so that the viewer is looking down on the singers, the subway and the escalators, with Pascal's head on the billboard directly behind the two girls busking. Horizontally moving credits steady, then, symbolically, move across the screen over subway walls, passing over a start-textured panel and a blurred panorama, passing vertically, ascending above the illuminated church windows to the rain-battered cross and the glow of a changing day.[177]

Metaphors, the Bible, and Resurrection

There are deliberate elements of ambiguity and paradox in *Jesus of Montreal*. For example, in the resurrection scene of the Passion Play, Mireille runs from the end of a tunnel proclaiming that she has seen the Master. Daniel-Jesus has been dead for ten years,

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[175] A term used in Australia for street or public place performance in order to make money.

[176] Baugh states that Daniel dies in the subway: 'at the very spot where Daniel has collapsed and died, analogically the tomb of Jesus ...' (1997, 129). Elsewhere he writes that Daniel dies on the cross (1997, 125), whereas, Daniel dies in the Jewish hospital, arms outstretched as if on a cross. This makes Baugh's analysis of 'Resurrection hope' flawed (1997, 129).

[177] See Baugh's Resurrection interpretation of this scene (1997, 123-129).

the actors say the returned man looks different, but they also recognise him as the Master. Viewers of the film, however, see, from a different perspective, bread given by the hooded man to the actors - in the same way that Daniel-Jesus distributed bread amongst the viewers of the Passion Play - yet the hands we see are *not* Daniel's hands. The glimpsed face is *not* Daniel's face more aged, it is a different face.[178] The resurrection is *metaphoric.* The returned man could be *any* man with the goodness of Jesus within him.

The movement of *Jesus of Montreal* is circular, and this in itself is a kind of resurrection. The film starts with a death and a resurrection when Pascal returns after his suicide at the end of the Dostoevsky play, *The Brothers Karamazov* (Barnes 1997, 186), and ends with the death and symbolic resurrection of Daniel. These symbolic resurrections signify more than Arcand's quoted play with contrasts. The many versions of resurrection do, as Baugh believes, destabilise or demythologise the sacredness of the Passion Play by making symbolic and metaphoric what many orthodox believers believe to be literal.[179]

Sallie McFague reminds us that in theological discussion we must always keep metaphor in mind. She suggests that we might

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[178] To be absolutely sure of this I have repeatedly replayed this section of the film. Barnes confirms my view, although he arrives at it with an argument that I see differently: 'amidst applause, the Jesus figure descends the steps and joins the rest of the cast. Now it is clear: the figure taken to be the resurrected Jesus was not Jesus! In the film, at least in part, belief in the resurrection arose because of mistaken identity. According to the mistaken identity view, Mary was initially correct. It was the gardener, not Jesus! This explanation for resurrection belief has, on occasion, expressed itself in life-of Jesus literature' (Barnes 1997, 182) (See John 20:11-18).

[179] Baugh notes that the Heavenly music and strategic lighting, as well as the movement of the final scenes and credits, contribute to the ascendance signified in *Jesus of Montreal* (1997, 129).

experiment with other models of God than those traditionally held, models that reflect both ecological concern and concern for justice. '[W]hat is needed in our ecological, nuclear age', McFague writes, 'is an imaginative vision of the relationship between God and the world that underscores their interdependence and mutuality, empowering a sensibility of care and responsibility toward all life ... '(1987, 60). She believes that the traditional view of resurrection does not fulfill the criteria of being imaginatively perceived as permanently present in every present and every space; and that it needs to be grasped as a worldly reality (McFague 1987, 60-62).

Conclusion

Jesus of Montreal explores the metaphoric and the literal, fact and fiction, and the power of biblical and scientific stories in our everyday lives. Acts and words that echo the Gospels become symbolic of contemporary issues (Reinhartz 1998, np). The film's dense, complex and contrasted layering demonstrates the interconnectedness and syncretism of story: how biblical stories, written decades after the death of Jesus, affect present stories and the cultures of contemporary society. In doing so, the film delivers a reminder that many Western understandings of the Universe are accepted with faith and have biblical rather than scientific origins; and that both biblical myths and scientific hypotheses need to be re-examined in a contemporary context.

The goodness represented in Jesus *does* recur in others as the metaphoric resurrections in *Jesus of Montreal* suggest. This brings

hope of a new world in which people love their neighbours, yet are also prepared to stand up for what they believe is right. In their critique of the film, Bruce Babbington and Peter William Evans write that 'the dead hero's organs survive him in the only postmodernist Resurrection available' (Babington and Evans 1993, 98), but this is too limiting an observation. The film *Jesus of Montreal* is itself a postmodern, resurrected story, with characters who perform as resurrected characters (from the old Passion Plays to the new). Constance appears in a video-play of Leclerc's Play and in Daniel's production: she, like Pascal, reappears. The actors are also historical people resurrected. Actors die and reappear. In the Passion Play Daniel, as Jesus, returns with each performance; Christ reappears to the actors of the Play, giving bread in the tunnel; Daniel is reborn through the theatre in his name; ascendance and resurrection is imaged in the closing scenes described above. These metaphorical aspects of resurrection, including the resurrections of the recipients of Daniel's heart and cornea,[180] are examples which are also postmodern. Fragments of old stories - including the 'Master' biblical story - are melded into a pastiche of the new, with similitude, created by technology and the camera, inviting a diversity of responses from the viewers.[181]

My reading of *Jesus of Montreal* is earthly or 'worldly' like McFague's. The Christ-figure who appears to the actor-disciples in the tunnel is not, as I see it, Daniel-Jesus resurrected but another

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[180] As Pallister notes, with Daniel's heart ascending in a plane (1995, 392).

[181] O'Brien's response to the surgical scene is, 'Even the apparent reductiveness of the medical conclusion leaves a residual suggestion that a life of the spirit endures beyond the body. Daniel Colombe is not just a Christ-figure but also, a "colombe" or "dove", a stand-in for the Holy Ghost' (1990, 49).

actor who gives bread in the compassionate tradition of Jesus. This differs from Baugh's reading in which Daniel reappears as the resurrected Christ (1997, 129).[182] He writes that 'Jesus of Nazareth could not be the Christ without Resurrection' (Baugh 1997, 27).

Divergent readings such as these separate science from religion.[183] For example, my reading accepts metaphor, symbolism, and science, and Baugh's reading accepts symbolism together with the theology and faith of the Resurrection. Baugh believes that 'the Resurrection, [is] clearly a crucial element in any Jesus film for it must represent the awesome mystery of the victory of God-in-Jesus over death and sin' (1997, 32).

The science-religion dialogue in *Jesus of Montreal* is discussed in some detail because it is of major ecocritical significance. Arcand's film, whilst providing a critique of consumerism and institutional hubris, does not present an ecological world view - this was not his intention - but it does provide stimulus for the 'conversation' that is still developing around his film. Baugh's contribution to this conversation - with faith in the 'victory of God-in-Jesus over death and sin' - is, from an ecological perspective, both life and death denying. It presumes that humanity has sinned (in the

[182] Yet, as mentioned previously, Baugh writes that Arcand 'in the end seems to skirt the question of Jesus's bodily resurrection' (1997, 113, see also 120-121). However, Arcand's multiple resurrections are not a 'skirting' but different, metaphorical interpretations of resurrection.

[183] Stephen Jay Gould discusses the tensions between science and religion in his book *Rock of Ages* (1999). Gould does not see how religion and science could be unified, or even synthesized, under any common scheme of explanation or analysis. Nevertheless, he does not see why there should be conflict between the two enterprises. Science, Gould says: 'tries to document the factual character of the natural world, and to develop theories that co-ordinate and explain these facts. Religion, on the other hand, operates in the equally important, but utterly different, realm of human purposes, meanings, values - subjects that the factual domain of science might illuminate, but can never resolve. Similarly, while scientists must operate with ethical principles, some specific to their practise, the validity of these principles can never be inferred from the factual discoveries of science' (1999, 5).

Garden of Eden) and needs to atone for that sin. That there can be victory over death belongs to mythology; death is an evolutionary necessity in the cycle of life, with all its wondrous forms and interconnections. I use the word 'wondrous' to signify earthly evolution as a way to replace the metaphysical adjectives of 'sacred' and 'divine'. In this way I am squeezing into an essential space between science and religion, a space that the poet or artist might seek[184]. There is an awe that many people experience in a relationships with nature, without relying on a God or Goddess in whom they can put their faith. Even, panentheism, the imminence of God in everything, whilst more likely to bring about an ecological response than belief in a distant transcendent God, is troubling for someone, like myself, who has participated only superficially in the culture and ideologies of monotheism.[185] Any hint that some other is taking care of things - be it Mother Nature, God or Christ the Saviour - however comfortable it may seem - may slow down the responsible processes and changes in our life-styles that scientists advise us are absolutely essential.[186]

Edward Goldsmith dedicated a millennium issue of the *Ecologist*, to religious issues. This overview of religious perspectives, while not of one voice in relation to God, is consistent in the need for new forms of spirituality and practice. Edward Echlin, for example, recognises that:

> The healing ministry should be broadened to include the Earth, the living soil, plants and animals, water and climate, and the science and

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[184] The position of spirituality that Bradley described in his Darwin and the worm story recounted earlier (Bradley 1998, 23,30)

[185] See Kate Rigby's overview of religion and spirituality and her suggestion of a 'Spiriuality of Immanence' (1999, 209-224).

[186] See my 'Introduction' for a discussion of this.

technology, which, when arrogantly misused, threaten the very continuation of our species and the biosphere as we know it (cited in Goldsmith 2000, 5).

Literal, metaphoric, and symbolic intepretations of story, such as these, sustain the ongoing dialogue of reception theory which recognises that theories are always evolving and, therefore, subject to change. Contested theories, including those of Creation, the Virgin Birth and Christ's resurrection, occur within the Catholic Church. All these dialogues, or conversations, can continue without the wars between science and religion that Gould, Collins, Crossan, McFague, Primavesi, Ruether, Spong, and others, seek to prevent.[187]

Arcand stimulates dialogues, conversations and debates by resisting closure as he presents multiple stories of faith, science, and practice. His complex interweaving of story within story and his use of parody, satire and irony invites us to look again and again to find in the stories presented to us some kind of truth and relevance to the world. Biblical stories are generally interpreted anthropocentrically and hierarchically and are, therefore, subject to criticism for their lack of ecological sensibility. Because stories, including the Passion story, are much repeated and are, therefore, familiar, they become accepted as 'truths'. Arcand subverts these stories by demonstrating how 'truths' vary when examined at different times from different perspectives - and this is an important function in ecocriticism.

[187] Gould proposes an 'example of respectful non-interference, accompanied by intense dialogue between the two distinct subjects, each covering a central facet of human existence' (1999, 5).

The next chapter, *Blade Runner*'s *Silent Spring*, extends from Arcand's postmodern present to Ridley Scott's postmodern dystopian future, which also enfolds the past, with its allegorical 'nostalgia for mythical origins' (Martin and Ostwalt 1995, 138).

Chapter Six

Blade Runner's Silent Spring

The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands but in seeing with new eyes - Marcel Proust

The science fiction film, *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott, first released in 1982 and loosely based on Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1996, first published 1969),[188] has continued to fascinate theorists, critics and film viewers for more than fifteen years - a colleague has just seen the film for the twentieth time.[189] The 'Director's Cut', released in 1992, is a more satisfying and successful version than earlier releases of the film, mainly because of the inclusion of a twelve second unicorn scene[190] - which introduces ambiguity and a mythological subtext to the film - and the removal of the narration and the finalé of an escape into verdant nature, the 'Ride into the Sunset' as it was called

[188] Greg Rickman's essay, 'Philip K. Dick on *Blade Runner*: They Did Sight Simulation on My Brain', describes the background of the move away from the novel (1997, 103-109).

Jim Dwyer's *Earthworks* includes an entry for Dick's novel, describing it as 'one of Science fiction's 100 best novels'. The reviewer ('HR') considers the novel deeper than the film, 'questioning what constitutes humanity, and offering a cautionary note about nuclear war and environmental degradation' (1996, 415). I disagree with the reviewer as I find all the elements mentioned in relation to the novel exist in the deeply structured film. The novel and the film differ greatly, however, so much so that I have treated the film almost independently of Dick's work.

[189] Sammon recommends two comprehensive sites:
http://www.rit.edu:80/~dbh69133/blade/brindex.html and
rtfm.mit.edu:/pub/usenet/news.answers/movies/bladerunner-faq

Writings about the film include Paul M. Sammon's *Future Noir: the Making of Blade Runner* (1996), and *Retrofitting Blade Runner* edited by Judith B. Kerman (1997). This insightful and varied collection of academic essays, includes second by second 'Film Notes', and an extensive bibliography plus an addendum which contains books, articles and reviews of the Director's Cut, and related audio-visual materials and electronic media (1997, 154-177, 273-294). An extensive network of publications is available via the World-Wide Web (Sammon 1996, 417).

[190] See Leon Heldrith's detailed discussion of this shot (1997, 309-311).

(Sammon 1996, 300).[191] In the context of *Blade Runner*'s dystopia such an ending is incredible; for science fiction to succeed in the long term as *Blade Runner* has, there needs to be plausibility within speculation.

Since the 'Director's Cut', *Blade Runner* seems to have had a phoenix-like resurgence. Just as the simulated humans, or replicants, become more than the sum of their parts as they develop humanity, so the film has become more than the sum of its parts with the synergistic interplay of direction, performances, cinematography, intertextuality, and technological effects that John J. Pierce describes as part of science fiction world creation and story-telling (1997, 201). Other contributions include the discussions of critics and fans, as well as scriptwriters, actors and film crew, all of which have been well documented by Sammon (1996). The release of five versions of *Blade Runner*, including the 'Director's Cut' (Sammon 1996, 369), has generated the multitude of receptions that reception theory accommodates (Abrams 1981, 155).

The ongoing popularity of *Blade Runner* has not been for its ecological perceptions, or its images of the American Dream gone astray. The success of the film - now an established referrent for

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[191] Industrial wastelands and factory farms are the conditions that Scott imagined would exist outside of the film's urban setting. For him there could be no escape into the utopian green of wildness. An (unused) alternative ending, written by Hampton Fancher, had more ecological input. He writes: 'Deckard just keeps walking until he drops [after Rachel has suicided]. Then he's lying in the sand almost too weak to move. Near his head is this turtle that's somehow been turned over and can't right itself. Deckard watches that turtle struggle for a long time. Finally it does flip itself over, and the turtle scuttles away. Deckard takes heart from this: he staggers up and begins to walk back from where he came from ... Then we came to the last shot in that script. It was a long pull-back. It began by receding from Deckard until he was just a tiny dot, then you saw a satellite photo of the lush beautifully blue planet that is Earth. And then you pulled back from that until you were lost in the cosmos. Fadeout ... Everyone loved that ending. ... We all cried over it' (Sammon 1996, 37).

postmodern debate and 'hightech' science-fiction films (Harvey 1992, 308-323) has been mainly due to Scott's carefully built up *mise-en-scene* with its pastiche of technology, architecture, advertising, and media. The choice of Harrison Ford as Deckard, a 'star' and hero in the world of movies, also contributes to *Blade Runner*'s success.

Scott describes depth in film as like a 700-layer cake (Sammon 1996, 47). It is this dense layering in *Blade Runner* that has provided material for the mass of literature and the numerous analyses that continue to be produced. The dense urban setting that Scott creates plus the film's intertextuality and references to the past - to *film noir* and the 1940s and 1950s in particular - supply an environment of signs, symbols and simulations that provide multiple meanings, only some of which may have been intended by Scott.[192] As Judith B. Kerman writes in 'Technology and Politics in the *Blade Runner* Dystopia':

> The extraordinary thing about *Blade Runner* is that it raises ... questions by showing them rather than by discussing them, by successfully incorporating its serious issues with the seamless complexity of its vision. Unlike all too much political art, it carries forward analysis and criticism by means of the imagination and by skillful manipulation of popular, even worn-out, genres. Finally it doesn't matter whether Scott and his colleagues intended a radical film or not. By the logic of the film's extrapolation, the power of its archetypes and the visceral rightness of its worldmaking, *Blade Runner* raises trenchant political questions about our world, its political economy, its technologies and its future (1997, 23).

Blade Runner's vision is indeed complex. Even the flaws and confused ideas that exist in the film have not entirely worked against the main themes: the questioning of what it means to be

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[192] Scott underplays the film's density of ideas by describing the film as 'only entertainment' (cited in Sammon 1996, xvii).

human; and what life would be like with cyborg-creating scientific gods in a new millennium.[193] There are many political, cultural and ecological issues that the film raises with its 'silent spring' of a polluted, overpopulated world coming to its end; where replicants,[194] according to the slogan of their 'maker', Doctor Eldon Tyrell, are constructed to be 'more human than human'; and where animals are mostly extinct or expensive simulated versions of highly valued originals. Genes in *Blade Runner* have become corporate property, managed as capital, providing labour resources and market commodities. Replicants as corporate models of obsolescence and redundancy represent a flawed system in which everything seems to be technologically replaceable; people and animals can be copied and disposed of; and when a place becomes polluted there is always another world to take over - like the 'Offworlds' where the replicants are sent as slave labour in the process of corporate expansion and colonisation.

It is ironic that Scott's dystopian world, a bad, black place, is named Los Angeles. Clearly Los Angeles in the year 2019 is not the angelic or sacred utopia that its name conjures, a place of past American dreams and a quest to reach the golden west. The angels have fallen; there is a loss of innocence and dream. Images of the city and its occupants have a nightmarish, gothic, *noir* quality in which

[193] Tony Fitzpatrick states: 'The academic and the non-academic literature making use of the cyborg is now vast [e.g. Haraway, 1989, 1991; Feathestone and Burrows, 1995; Gray, 1995; Balsamo 1996; Hochman, 1998; Legler, no date]'. 'The cyborg is partly the product of surgical implantation, where the machine and/or the simulations it generates (as in cosmetic surgery) penetrate the surface of the body. The cyborg is also the product of the daily interaction of perception/cognition with the screen, where the body melts into the electronic images that it receives, reflects and transmits (Lupton and Noble, 1977). As the organic becomes harder and the synthetic becomes softer the cyberbody begins to emerge: the cyborg is what Burroughs, in a different context, referred to as the "soft machine". Technology wraps itself around the body in its boundless ubiquity, absorbing every spatial and temporal fragment' (Fitzpatrick 1999, 96-97).

[194] Replicants are 'androids' in Dick's novel.

late twentieth century environmental fears are depicted as reality. There is constant rain. Flickering artificial lights and signs replace sunlight. High above the spectre of this decaying city Tyrell looks down from his Olympus to the gaseous outpourings of his operations that flare and cloud the sky. In this gloomy establishing shot, an unbodied, huge blue eye is twice intercut, its iris reflecting the flames.[195] This image of omniscience contributes to a sense of diabolical control over the city below.

The *mise en scene* is developed around power structures and the geography of buildings and place: those above are part of Tyrell Corporation and Offworld multinationals; those between, like Sebastian and Deckard, live in deserted apartments on the upper floors of the buildings; and the 'little people', 'the chicken heads', are down below, scavenging in the streets of a dying Earth. Sebastian, Tyrell's genetic designer, is not permitted to travel Offworld. He suffers from premature aging, the 'Methuselah Syndrome', or 'accelerated decrepitude' as Pris, a replicant, describes it (Kerman 1997, 206). In side-streets, small manufacturers do their ghoulish work replicating body parts for Tyrell Corporation. People, homeless, hungry and stunted, warm themselves by street fires and forage amongst piles of rubbish.

Absence is signifed in the film by motherless creations - the 'replicant' creatures and humans manufactured by Tyrell Corporation. Lost is the mother and the wild. Language is a mélange, a 'city-speak' not always understood by Earth inhabitants including Deckard - an Asian noodle-server, seen at the beginning

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[195] For a detailed description of this sequence, see Boozer (1997, 213).

of the film, does not comprehend his food order. There is an implicit loss of language in this mélange. In the higher echelon of *Blade Runner*'s world American-English is the language of the privileged. Again there is a geography of space between 'the haves and the have nots'. In the low life of night clubs and bars the opium of soporific pleasure obscures the grim realities of corporate deception and manipulation in Los Angeles' deteriorated city.

Offworld is the newest American Dream:[196] an Edenic world with the promise of Paradise, where replicant workers are available for the elite who pass the medicals. The irony of this promise of Paradise is exposed by the juxtaposition of corporate advertising and promises of enjoyment with the poverty of the streetscapes; and the reality that there can be no escape from the master eye and a totally polluted world. Huge billboards, neon lit, advertise 'take-over' corporations like Budweiser and Coca-Cola. Pan-Am is still in the air travel business for the elite - presumably to travel trans-continental and trans-world. An omniscient advertiser promotes Offworld pleasures from space: 'a new life awaits you in the Offworld colonies. The chance to begin again in a golden land of opportunity and adventure ... helping America in the New World'. The advertisements patchily illuminate the darkness, as do the eye-lights of black, bat-like police hover-vehicles. *PURGE* is the signal that flashes within a vehicle to Gaff, a detective who

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[196] The reality of NASA's space programme is that it is jeopardised by costs that could rise to more than 100 billion American dollars. According to Daniel Goldin, NASA's administrator, 'the space shuttle is nearly two decades old and a trip to Mars is not yet within reach. The International Space Station will keep the ball rolling until we have the ability to send astronauts beyond the moon'. Goldin says, 'if you cancel this programme you cancel the future of human space flight ... you are not going to open up the space frontier' (cited in Seife, 1999, 27).

keeps an eye on Rick Deckard, a reluctant member of a special police-squad of bounty hunters.[197] It is the job of Blade Runners to 'retire' replicants who have escaped their Offworld slavery and returned to the dying Earth. When a Blade Runner is killed by a replicant, Deckard is recalled to do the job that he no longer wants. He is 'tired of killing', but he has no choice. If he is not a cop he becomes one of the 'little people'.

The replicants, Leon Kowalski, Roy Batty,[198] Zhora and Pris, described as Nexus-6, are short-term models with a life-span of four years. They have have superior strength and ability and intelligence at least equal to humans. The four have rebelled against their Offworld slavery and have returned to Earth in a bid to meet their 'maker', Tyrell, in order to fight the early 'retirement' (death) planned for them. A later, and presumably more advanced replicant, Rachael, Tyrell's niece, has also been released on Earth. An inevitable love story is built around Deckard, presumed to be human and Rachael, the replicant. Deckard's identity contributes to the film's mystery - although at times it seems as if Scott is unsure himself whether Deckard is replicant or human.

Rachael, Zhora, and Pris: Monstrous Females or *Femme Fatales*?

Rachael, the latest model replicant, beautiful and 'virginal', with the implanted memory of Tyrell's niece and an extended life-span,

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[197] Those critics I have read do not comment on the film's title, 'Blade Runner', other than to note that the name was previously used by two authors: William Burroughs and Alan E.Nourse. The title could mean running on the knife edge: those who kill are likely to be killed; or a play on 'cutting edge' technology.

[198] Roy Batty, *le Roi* - the mad king.

is outstanding in science-fiction creations of womanly artifice. Rachael has had no Earth or Offworld experience or obvious connections with other replicants whilst under 'protection' as Doctor Tyrell's 'niece', hence her 'virginity'. She remains submissive and cooperative with Deckard in Scott's fantasy of a Rita Hayworth version of womanhood (Sammon 1996, 92).[199] Rachael reverses the situation of men killing women when she shoots Leon as he is about to kill Deckard. She is then assured of Deckard's protection - 'I owe you one', he says. David Harvey writes:

> Rachael can re-enter the symbolic realm of a truly human society only by acknowledging the overwhelming power of the Oedipal figure, the father. That is the only route she can take in order to be able to respond to the question, 'Tell me about your mother? In submitting to Deckard (trusting him, deferring to him, and ultimately submitting to him physically), she learns the meaning of *human* love. In killing the replicant Leon as he is about to to kill Deckard, she provides the ultimate evidence of the capacity to act as Deckard's woman (Harvey 1992, 312).

Unlike Pris and Zhora, Rachael, the 'perfect model', does not show a male-threatening 'monstrous female' side towards Deckard. Yet, adding to the mystery and mythological ambiguity associated with Rachael is the shadow of the 1940s, in her make-up. Her padded shoulders, the cigarette smoke that mists across her face, and the film's lighting and shadows, are all reminiscent of the mysterious *femme fatale* of *film noir*, associated with world weary detectives, mystery, and black cities, such as *Blade Runner*'s city, Los Angeles. Rachael may have inbuilt qualities - or monstrous flaws - that are not exposed in her undeveloped image of the perfect woman. Her ambiguous role (as *femme fatale* and protector) both reflects and challenges the chauvinism of

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[199] Scott's homage to Hayworth and the film *Gilda* (1946) (Sammon 1996, 383).

Hollywood mainstream cinema which prioritizes the male-father-lover-voyeur desire for a perfect woman.[200] Scott stated that he had decided to make *Blade Runner* an inversion of Hollywood values. He rightly said: 'If this patriarchal technology could create artificial woman, then they'd certainly design them to be young and sexually attractive' (Sammon 1996, 383).

What happens, though, when these images of womanhood are continually presented on the screen? Do they subvert Hollywood values or, as I suspect, perpetuate them? Rachael's persona both perpetuates and parodies models of Hollywood values and fairy stories of beautiful maidens, and there is another aspect: behind Rachael's innocent facade is an embedded memory, one that combines with her own short memory, Tyrell's niece's memory in fact. Memories are a part of life that shapes who we are and what we believe,[201] yet we know nothing about Tyrell's niece, her ambitions, her values, whether she works with her uncle, or even if she agreed for her memories to be copied. She is part of a past of which we know nothing. Rachael's extended eye test with Deckard records her emotive responses, particularly to questions about animals.[202] She is visibly shocked when he identifies her as a replicant. Rachael, then, could be what she seems: a fresh, innocent model who has not yet had to fight her 'retirement'. Even when Deckard 'captures' Rachael (by preventing her from leaving his apartment) she remains the ambiguous embodiment

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[200] Perhaps we never have a real understanding of Rachael's character because she has not had the years in which to mature, therefore she is doll-like, as Pris is doll-like in a later scene (when she hides amongst other 'dolls' in Sebastian's appartment).

[201] Sebastian reminds the viewer of genetic transfer when he says to Pris and Batty, 'there's some of me in you' (Barr 1997, 91).

[202] Animal references are more explicit in the novel.

of the 'man-made' female, both protective and submissive. When Deckard lifts a cover from her face as she is lying asleep, waiting for him in his apartment, he kisses her. In this scene she is the sleeping princess woken with a kiss by the Prince. However, in *Blade Runner*, as in life, things are not always what they seem. Rachael is programmed for more life-time than the Nexus 6 models, but to avoid premature 'retirement' she needs to escape, and to do that she needs Deckard, a Blade Runner.

The Nexus 6 female models, Pris and Zhora, are pleasure models, designed for men by men (Barr 1997, 29, 30), but when under attack we see that they are not frail, unintelligent creatures in need of the protection of men to survive. Their strength and desire to live is as strong as male strength, male desire. Strength in females, though, has frequently been associated with monstrosity. When Zhora and Pris defend their lives they appear to be monstrous, castrating females. Pris metamorphoses from baby doll and veiled doll-bride to an aggressive super-athlete when she grips Deckard's head in a life-threatening thigh lock. Zhora, the night club temptress, turns from an Eve beguiler to a deadly assailant when she grips Deckard around the throat before being interrupted in her dressing room. There are (Freudian) psychological and mythological links here through which Scott parodies views of women and nature as mysterious, inviting and threatening - the *femmes fatales* and monstrous females who are believed to bring death to men: *le petit mort* of sexual intercourse. Women and their sexuality are linked with nature and *le grand mort* at life's end. The same fears of women that are upheld throughout *Malleus Maleficarum* (Kramer & Sprenger 1971) are perpetuated in Scott's film.[203]

Yet what occurs in the film is what occurs regularly in life: women killed by men. Zhora, like Pris, dies in a gory spectacle of acrobatics and blood which emphasises a prolonged 'dying' rather than the corporate 'retirement' euphemistically described by Blade Runners and their superiors.

Loss of the Mother and the Wild

Only traces of a long lost mother-goddess society exist in *Blade Runner*. Lost is the archetypal mother, Mother Earth, the Great Abyss, The Creatrix, all metaphors for a pagan sentient nature. Covert allusions to goddesses and gods, and to extinct and mythical creatures, link with the mysterious past of unicorn and fable. Creatures that appear in the film were once totems associated with goddesses before the usurping of these totems by the gods. These fabulous and replicant creatures are reminders of loss. The sense of loss - of a golden age, and of mothers, goddesses, and wildness - integral to *Blade Runner*, forms part of an interconnected and evolutionary mythology which echoes the historic elimination of the female from positions of power from ancient tales to contemporary story-telling (Campbell 1988, 165-9, Graves 1984, 13-15).

Mother-goddess creative powers are now taken over by Tyrell Corporation. The replicant, Leon, is already beginning to lose control when he is asked about animals that he has never known, not fabulous animals like the unicorn but *extinct* animals. He completely loses control when asked about his mother. 'My

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[203] See Warner (1994, 1-16); and Creed (1990, 214-218; 1999, 251-266).

mother? Let me tell you about my mother': and Leon shoots his questioner. In a patricide reminiscent of Oedipus, Batty kills his 'father', Tyrell, yet he has not embraced his mother, as Oedipus incestuously and unknowingly did. In *Blade Runner*'s patriarchal world there is no mother to embrace.[204]

Memories that replicants have of mothers or animals are implants, 'man-made memories, but memories no less real than the ones humans manufacture for themselves' (Barr 1997, 28). Photographs, treasured by replicants, are a link to the memory of mothers, but the photographs are replications of mothers. Rachael's photograph, which she believes to be of herself and her mother, is her life-line to a past that she believes existed, one with which she hopes to convince Deckard of her humanity. Because replicants have no mother, and no past, only genetic imprints and photographs help them understand a history in which they have no part. The many photographs on Deckard's piano constitute his history, just as they do for (other) replicants.[205]

By replacing the mother Tyrell acts like an impotent male continuing what Irene Diamond describes as 'the age-old male supremacist war against women's reproductive powers' (1990, 203). Corporations like Tyrell's seek to become androgynous creators and providers,

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[204] Oedipus is the supreme tragic hero who commited incest with his mother. It was his destiny that he would kill his father (Laius). He put out his own eyes after discovering that a man he had killed in anger was his father.

[205] Photographs for *Blade Runner's* replicants represent history. Guiliana Bruno recognises the importance of photographs to history and memory in his quotation of Barthes: 'when Roland Barthes contemplates a photograph of his *unknown* mother it is part of *his* history: 'That is [what] the time when my mother was alive *before me* is - History. No amnesis could ever make me glimpse this time starting from myself - whereas, contemplating a photograph in which she is hugging me, a child, against her, I can waken in myself the ruffled softness of her crepe de Chine and the perfume of her rice powder (cited in Bruno 1990, 183).

secular gods (Boozer 1997, 223). A world in which the mother is absent is an unnatural world. Human and nonhuman animals birth from the mother. Diamond writes:

> Babies, once primarily dealt with within the world of women, are now the subject of theological proclamations, medical surveillance, and international policy. The possibilities posed by the so-called reproductive technologies, which divide bodies into readily manipulable parts, have added new elements of commodification and sci-fi fantasy to the historic mysteries of human fertility (1990, 201).

What *Blade Runner* makes clear, amongst its many ambiguities and the blurring of human and technological boundaries, is that scientific experimentation devoid of social responsibility is *in itself* monstrous. As Cranny-Francis points out, this 'Promethian act' is not only misuse but also an 'appropriation of a power which resides not with the gods, but with women' (Kuhn 1990, 220).[206] Monstrosity results when that power - the power to give birth - is taken over by men. The 'maker', Tyrell, is the monster rather than the replicant offspring. As Boozer states in his essay, 'Crashing the Gates of Insight', the lack of a mother figure emphasises a telltale inbalance in Tyrell's futuristic technological 'family'. He describes the 'termination' of Pris by Deckard as 'suggestive of copulation and perhaps violent birthing'. Tyrell's scientific, patriarchal system usurps 'the nurturing, creative-protective mother principle' (Boozer 1997, 222-223). In 'Metahuman "Kipple" Or, Do Male Movie Makers Dream of Electric Women?: Speciesism and Sexism in *Blade Runner*,' Maureen Barr describes Pris's defensive reaction as the reverse of the birth process when she tries to kill Deckard. Instead of a male baby's head emerging

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[206] The womb of Mary was conveniently used for the birth of a holy child, without any human interaction.

from between his mother's legs, Deckard's head is almost crushed by a female who does not have a mother (Barr 1997, 26). Rachael's name may be an ironic reference to Rachel, the biblical mother of a new nation, Israel. Rachael is produced without a mother and, presumably, never can be a mother, let alone the mother of a new nation.[207]

Loss of the mother and mother-goddess society, paralleled with the loss of goddess totems, is a reminder of things partly forgotten - of animals, voices, languages and stories. The owl, the serpent, the dove and the unicorn have their own stories. They appear in *Blade Runner* in association with a character, or characters, supplying additional levels of meaning.

The Owl

In the Gnostic tradition the owl represents Sophia, or Holy Wisdom: she who was there at the beginning (Pagels 1990, 79; Cady *et al* 1989). An owl is also the totem of the goddess of love and war, Athena. Athena is born fully armed from the head of a man - the god Zeus - as Rachael and the other replicants are also 'born' from the head of man. An owl is Tyrell's companion in *Blade Runner*, present in his corporate headquarters and again in his inner sanctum. One of the owl's eyes is opaque, seemingly blind. This indicates corporate sickness, affected vision and loss of wisdom; and that Tyrell is a failed usurper of female power.

The Serpent

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[207] Robert Graves, in *The White Goddess*, tells the story of Rachel who married Jacob. Jacob then becomes Ish-Rachel or Israel - Rachel's man (1984,161).

Like Eve in the canonical 'Genesis' story, Zhora is betrayed by the serpent. A scale fom the skin of her snake, found in the shower of the replicant, Leon, leads her killer, Deckard, to her. In the gnostic tradition the serpent does not betray Eve as it does in the canonical myth, but is the giver of knowledge (Graves 1984, 253).[208] Zhora's short replicant existence, like Eve's, is a downfall from the mythological world of the goddess, the serpent and Paradise.[209] As Boozer writes, 'More the irony that she is reduced to the level of a side-show simulacrum and victim' (1997, 219). A narrator presents Zhora as: ''Miss Hilary and her snake. Watch her take her pleasure from the serpent that once corrupted men'. The serpent is replicant. In the scene in her dressing room Zhora says to Deckard, 'do you think I could afford a real one?' A photograph of Zhora found by Deckard shows a serpent marking on her forehead, thus linking her with goddess mythology. Her fall from goddess to pleasure model, working in low-life strip-tease club as an Eve beguiler, seems even more tragic when we see, once again, the serpent symbol on her neck after she has been shot by Deckard. Totems associated with the goddess were usurped by the gods. This was particularly evident with the serpent totem. Because of its ability to regenerate by shedding its skin the serpent was believed to hold the secret of immortality - the secret men eternally seek. As goddesses were gradually deposed, the serpent became associated with the phallus, the gods, science, and the medical fraternity.[210]

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[208] Replicant knowledge, however, is limited to programmed knowledge, or the remembered knowledge of their limited lifetimes.

[209] Zhora's name has associations with Zoroastrianism, a dualistic religion derived from Persian pantheism of the 8th century, BC, and instituted by Zoroaster (Collins 1985, 624).

[210] In an ancient Lithuanian tale a snake called 'Zemyne', which means 'earth', has the status of a goddess. She is the ruler of the underworld and the mother of nature-spirits. Zemyn has a strong resemblance to ancient goddesses such as Inanna, Ishtar, and Astarte (Sax 1998, 73).

The Dove

In Graves' story, Rachel - who married Jacob and became the mother of Israel - is a dove-priestess (1984, 161). The dove was once sacred to the love-goddess of Greece and Syria before being usurped by Christianity (Graves 1984, 125-337). In the Christian story Noah releases a dove to find new life - symbolised by the olive branch it brings back to the Ark. Batty spikes his palms with a nail, and later releases a dove from his hands, images suggesting both Christ's death and resurrection and Batty's transcendence after 'death'. Hope is signified as the dove flies into a blue sky and for the first time in *Blade Runner* light is seen in the sky.[211] But how could the dove *not* be replicant when all other creatures are either extinct or replicants? The possibility that the symbol of Christ - the dove - could be replicant presents an exceedingly cynical and confusing view. There are also inconsistencies with the Christian imagery associated with Batty, a replicant seeking revenge, as well as more life. None of Batty's actions are Christ-like until he saves Deckard from his fall. Even then, Batty does not give up his life so that Deckard and others may live. Batty has killed his father-God, and he is expiring anyway.[212]

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[211] For several critics the blue sky is symbolic of hope but Sammon reports that the blue sky resulted because Scott could not get a damp dove to fly in the rain, and that he was forced to pick up a shot of another bird months later in England (Sammon 1996, 415).

[212] The use of a Dove and the 'time to die' speech was a last minute idea from the actor Rutger Hauer (Sammon 1996, 97). Forest Pyle describes the heavily allegorised shots and scenes that cannot be squared with the symbolic or metaphorical references they invite as 'visual excess'. He considers the shots of Batty associated with the Christian narrative invalidated by the film's own narrative logic. Batty has nailed his hand to prolong his life and has killed his father, Tyrell. Pyle correctly states that: 'What the film leaves us with are allegorical shots severed from their mythological sources, empty allegories that cannot be redeemed by the Christian narrative' (1993, 229).

The Unicorn

The unicorn scene that links Deckard to a fabulous world suggests that the unicorn is part of *his* implanted memory. This more than any other clue in the film indicates that Deckard is a replicant. A milk-white unicorn is a subject of medieval mythology which, according to Graves, links with Wisdom:

> ... the Roe in the Thicket. It lodges under an apple tree, the tree of immortality-through-wisdom. It can be captured only by a pure virgin - Wisdom herself. The purity of the virgin stands for spiritual integrity (1984, 255).

As the unicorn is captured by a pure virgin, so is Deckard when he responds to the lure of Rachael, a 'virgin' replicant. According to Graves, there is a Provencal version of the unicorn myth. This version suggests a more threatening *femme fatale* side to Rachael and a more sinister ending to the film: the virgin, having caught the unicorn allows him to nuzzle at her breast. She then leads the unicorn to the hunter (1984, 256).[213]

The origami unicorn left in the path of Rachael and Deckard - in the penultimate scene before they leave the elevator - is another ambiguous symbol, an uncertain sliver of hope (like the dove released as Batty expires). It could also be a reminder that just as Deckard has knowledge of Rachael's implanted memories the ever vigilant police detective, Gaff, has knowledge of Deckard's unicorn

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[213] Boria Sax writes that the German antiquarian Erich Ebeling's story of Enkidu and the harlot in The Epic of Gilgamesh is the origin of unicorn legends in Europe and similar stories in India. Sax tells a story similar to Graves: 'the unicorn of medieval legend cannot be overcome by hunters, yet it will lose its wildness, come to a young girl, a virgin, and lay its horn on her lap. The unicorn may then be captured with ease. The girl has changed from a Sumero-Akkadian harlot to a European virgin over the millenia, but she shows her former lewdness in a few European retellings. She must sometimes appear naked or show her breasts to the unicorn, as the Sumero-Akkadian harlot did to Enkidu' (1998, 39).

vision (Kerman 1997, 310). Gaff has left his origami 'trademark', indicating that he knows Rachael and Deckard's movements, but has allowed their escape. The origami unicorn could also be his reminder that they cannot escape the master eye.[214]

'Genesis', Science Fiction, and the Mastery of Nature

Science fiction is, amongst other things, the imagining of a future world where technology and science is advanced by humans who are usually, but not always, in control. As a genre, science fiction provides a distancing view that enables us to see and 'to reveal ourselves to ourselves' (Kerman, 1997, 193). *Blade Runner*, with its mix of genres (science fiction, film *noir*, horror, detective story) takes us still further. Not only does the film reveal ourselves to ourselves but it also leads us to question the *actions* that have brought our world to the stage in which human dominance is affecting the well-being of other humans and other species. The density of Scott's visual and textual layers in *Blade Runner* provides scope to explore themes common to the genre of science fiction (Kuhn 1990, xxi, 8): the so-called mastery of nature and the related themes of myopia or blindness and technology going astray (as with Maria the android in *Metropolis*, and Hal the computor in *2001, A Space Odyssey*). I say *so-called* because the mastery of nature is an arrogant and deluded term denoting human hubris. Humans *are* nature; not only are we nature, we are animals within nature. Mastery within nature is where ecological problems lie: in the

[214] In 'Fabulous Beasts', Graves describes the unicorn's exalted horn which in Egyptian architecture is the obelisk and has 'a square base tapering to a pyramidical point: it expresses dominion over the four quarters of the world and the zenith' (1984, 411). Tyrell's headquarters similarly dominate. Deckard is associated with the unicorn and the unicorn is associated with Tyrell Corporation (an ambiguity that further complicates Scott's ambiguities).

domination and oppression of nonhuman nature by humans, and of humans by other humans who are unable or unwilling to recognise mutual dependencies and interconnectedness.

Barbara Kingsolver, in *High Tide In Tucson*, writes:

> It's starting to look as if the most shameful tradition of Western civilisation is our need to deny we are animals. In just a few centuries of setting ourselves apart as landlords of the Garden of Eden, exempt from the natural order and entitled to hold dominion, we have managed to behave like so-called animals anyway, and on top of it to wreck most of what took three billion years to assemble. Air, water, earth, and fire - so much of our own element so vastly contaminated, we endanger our own future. Apparently we never owned the place after all. Like every other animal, we're locked into our niche: the mercury in the ocean, the pesticides on the soyabean fields, all come home to our breast-fed babies. In the silent spring we are learning it's easier to escape from a chain gang than a food chain. Possibly we will have the sense to begin a new century by renewing our membership in the Animal Kingdom (1995, 10).

The concept of humans as landlords in the Garden of Eden and the denial of ourselves as animals is reinforced in the West by literal interpretations of 'Genesis' and other biblical stories which contribute to the debasement of the nonhuman and the female in a human and male privileging world. As biblical stories are the most influential stories in the Western world, they form part of a belief system still largely unquestioned today. Northrop Frye describes the importance of the Edenic story in the canon of myth:

> Most cultures regard certain stories with more reverence than others, either because they are thought of as historically true or because they have come to bear a heavier weight of conceptual meaning. The story of Adam and Eve in Eden has thus a canonical position for poets in our tradition whether they believe in its historicity or not. The reason for the greater profundity of canonical myth is not solely tradition, but the result of a greater degree of metaphorical identification than is possible in myth (1972, 188).

Graves includes an earlier version of the 'Genesis' myth in *The White Goddess*, one that recalls the loss of the Mother - associated with a bounteous and fertile earth - and is more favourable to women:

> Jehovah did not figure in the original myth. It is the Mother of all Living, conversing in triad, who casts Adam out of her fertile riverine dominions because he has usurped some prerogative of hers - whether caprifying fig-trees or planting grain is not clear - lest he should also usurp her prerogative of dispensing justice and dispensing oracles. He is sent off to till the soil in some less bountiful region (Graves 1984, 257fn).

The curse on the woman in 'Genesis' - that she should be at enmity with the serpent - is obviously misplaced, according to Graves; who also writes that the story of Eve formed by God from Adam's rib seems to be an anecdote based on a picture in which Baal drives a curved knife under the fifth rib of his twin whilst watched by the naked goddess Anatha. This has been iconotropically misread as Jehovah's removal of the sixth rib, which turns into Eve (Graves 1984, 257fn) - another male 'birth'.

The myth of the expulsion of Adam from the Garden contributes to the subtexts of *Blade Runner*'s fallen world.[215] Tyrell, like God in the 'Genesis' myth, is fearful that man 'will live forever' and usurp his powers as sole creator:[216]

> Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever"-
> therefore the LORD GOD sent him out of the Garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.
> So he drove out the man; and he placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to

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[215] In a nightclub scene with Zhora and the serpent, for example.

[216] Lynda Haas writes about a 'penchant for erasing mothers' in Disney films (1995, 13, 193-211).

guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:20-24).

The Hero, The Monster and the Saviour: and a Question of Humanity

> The Four Errors - Man has been educated by his errors. First he always saw himself incompletely; second, he endowed himself with fictitious attributes; third, he placed himself in a false order or rank in relation to animals and nature; fourth, he invented ever new tables of goods and always accepted them for a time as eternal and unconditional: as a result of this, now one and now another human impulse and state held first place and was ennobled because it was esteemed so highly. If we remove the effects of these four errors, we should also remove humanity, humaneness and "human dignity."
> - Friedrich Neitzche, *The Gay Science*[217]

Deckard may be Tyrell's late model replicant, but he seems more like a failed version of a stock mythical character: the hero who, against overwhelming odds, fights the monsters and rescues the fair maiden. Deckard is saved by replicants: first by the maiden, Rachael, when he is being attacked by the replicant, Leon. Then he is saved from his literal fall by Batty. Deckard does not kill the greatest monster of all, Tyrell. Indirectly he works for him. Although Deckard battles with four replicants, the two he 'retires' are females. One of these, Zhora, he shoots in the back. What kind of hero would do that? Scott describes his intentions in creating the role of *Blade Runner*:

> I decided to make *Blade Runner* a[n] ... inversion of Hollywood values. What I was really dealing with in *Blade Runner* was an anti-hero, an almost soulless man who really didn't give a shit whether he shot these artificial humans in the front or in the back. He's simply there to do the job. But what we learn at the beginning of the film through the voice-over, which is now gone, thank God, is that he's also begun to act with a certain amount of remorse. Deckard starts the picture realising he's getting touched by his work. Which of course sets up the ensuing situations that turn his world upside-down (Sammon 1996,

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[217] Cited in Shapiro (1993, 65).

383).[218]

Rachael begins to turn Deckard's world upside down when she asks him if he has ever taken the test he imposed upon her. He gradually begins to question his own humanity, his own memories. By connecting with the photographs on his piano as she plays, Rachael draws Deckard close to her. His rough treatment of her gradually changes as he gains humanity in his relationship with her. In earlier scenes Deckard is also affected by Leon and Batty's distress at the loss of Zhora and Pris.

Forest Pyle discusses the cyborg - a human and machine hybrid - in *Blade Runner* and the *Terminator* series, as 'unsettled and unsettling speculations on the borders that separate the human and the nonhuman' (1993, 228). Pyle recognises that not only do these science fiction films with a distinctly dystopian tone reflect the threats to humanity posed by unchecked technological developments, but they also raise more probing questions about the consequences of our definitions of the human; and that when we make cyborgs - at least when we make them in movies - we make, and on occasion, unmake, our conceptions of ourselves (1993, 228).

In essence the 'Director's Cut' retains the central question of Dick's novel: 'What constitutes an authentic human being?' (Sammon 1996, 16). In an interview with Sammon, Dick refers to androids (replicants) as a metaphor for the inhumane:

'Although it's essentially a dramatic work, the moral and philosophical

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[218] At this stage in film production Scott envisages Deckard as human, not replicant.

> ambiguities it dealt with are really very profound; Sheep stemmed from my basic interest in the problem of differentiating the authentic human being from the reflexive machine, which I call an android. In my mind an android is a metaphor for people who are physiologically human but behaving in a nonhuman way' (Sammon 1996, 17).

Deckard is not quite the 'cold fish' of Dick's story. Early in the film we are told that he is tired of killing, but there is still in his character a lack of humanity which contrasts with the care the replicants demonstrate with each other - that is, until he begins to develop humanity in his relationship with Rachael. As Steve Carper points out:

> each replicant death is meaningful, in the display of emotions it engenders, in the affirmation of life which is its purpose in the private eye genre. Pris's extraordinary life force exploding from her wounded body, Leon's death instigating fear and love in Rachael and Deckard, Roy's mystic heightened consciousness as his life-force novas and fades are steps in the rehabilitation of Deckard's humanity (Carver 1997,190).

The comparison of humanity and nonhumanity becomes confusing when we are led to believe that Deckard is a replicant. The film's finale then becomes a union of two replicants rather than a human and replicant cyborg union. The blurring of boundaries, the inhumane human/human replicant distinction, much discussed by critics of the film (Shapiro 1993, 65-83) is lost. However, the ambiguity between human characters and replicants that exists in the film does mean that the viewer is continually asking what is more 'real', what *is* a sentient being? The replicants with their 'humanity' or the humans with their lack of feeling?

Batty's quest is for extended life but the questions he and the other replicants need answered are archetypal questions sourced in creation stories and mythology. Who am I? What is my relationship

with the world? What is my destiny? To know *who we are* we need to know and understand our metaphorical Earth-mother, and our biological mother and father.[219] We need to understand our relationship with nonhuman nature, our relationships *within* nature in a cycle that accepts death as a process of life.

The question of mortality is Batty's obsession and a major mythological theme. In a scene in Tyrell's inner sanctum Tyrell asks 'what's the problem?' Batty replies, 'it's death, death is the problem. I want more life'.[220] Batty's metamorphosis to a saviour figure occurs when he can expect nothing,[221] yet he saves the man who hunts him, Deckard. When Batty expires, Deckard learns more about what it means to be human; and what it means to be classified as nonhuman. He is visibly affected by Batty's final words and actions which reflect compassion, a poetic vision, a 'soul':

> I've seen things you people wouldn't believe, attacked ships on fire on the coasts of Orion. All these moments will be lost in time, like tears in the rain. Time to die.

The monster (Batty) becomes a saviour, the hunter (Deckard) becomes the hunted. Batty's empathetic response to Deckard, and, earlier, with Pris, contrasts with the inhuman callousness of the men who act as God and treat others as pawns in a chess game.

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[219] 'Only 5% of children conceived by donor inseminations were told of their origins'. 'A check of 276 families through four fertility units in Sydney and Newcastle found most parents did not intend to tell their child that they were the product of artificial insemination with sperm from donors'. Stephen Steigrad, director of the department of reproductive medicine at 'Sydney's Royal Hospital for Women, said the results of the study were surprising (*The Mercury*, Sept 1, 1997, 6).

[220] What will I do to inherit eternal life? The archetypal question (Luke 10:25).

[221] Tyrell is dead and Batty will expire.

In this way the film calls to account scientists' lack of empathy when, like Tyrell, they fail to adequately consider the objects of their experimentation and the suffering of their flawed creations.

Blade Runner and *Silent Spring*

Blade Runner's vision of the future is one that the script-writer[222] Hampton Fancher describes as Los Angeles in the present:

> ... a simple walk through any downtown neighborhood should convince viewers that the trash-strewn, poverty-ridden, overpopulated streets of *Blade Runner* are already with us today (Sammon 1996, 6).

Fancher's concerns were related to species extinction as well as the degradation of the city. He said, 'Everyday I was thinking, Where are the owls? Where are the trees? Where is our fresh water?' (cited in Sammon 1996, 37). Perhaps it was for this reason that *Blade Runner* is set in the not too distant future. As critics have pointed out, the film is a combination of genres, and does not fit exactly into the science fiction genre (Boozer, 1997, 212-215; Pierce 1997, 202). Much of what it depicts exists *now:* species extinction, crowded cities,[223] polluted air from the sulphuric emisions of factories, decaying buildings, corporate dominance, genetic manipulation, the widening division between the rich and the poor. There is also the costly drive to discover new worlds whilst people suffer hunger and sickness without access to basic needs. In Carson's 'Fable for Tomorrow' (1991, 21) no birds sing;[224] there are no trees,

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[222] Two scriptwriters are credited: Fancher and David Peoples.

[223] The most striking paradox, observed by Kerman, 'is the sense of overcrowding at street level, while a major character J.F. Sebastian, lives alone in a deserted building [as does Deckard] and states that here is no housing shortage'. This irrationality is discussed by Kerman from a marxist perspective in which such contradictions are considered inevitable under capitalism (1997, 17).

plants, or grasses; no animals are visible or audible, apart from rats. Carson was concerned about the ability of different species, including humans, to breed in the future. Her fable describes the 'grim spectre' of world ecological problems as if they all existed at the same time, in one community:

> it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them. A grim spectre has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know (1991, 22).

Just as much of Carson's composite place is pastiche, *Blade Runner* 's dystopia is similarly a blending of American or world-wide social and environmental problems in which distinctions of time and place are eroded. Carson's eloquent plea in *Silent Spring* for the protection of Earth and its species from toxic chemicals contained warnings that received a mixed reception. Her criticism was not the kind of news that the manufacturers of pesticides and herbicides welcomed. The response to her book was an attack by scientists and representatives of corporations and the industry. A 1970 Nobel Prize winner (for developing new wheat strains), Norman Borlaug, blamed *Silent Spring* for its 'hysterical propoganda' against

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[224] Monsanto's soya bean production, used for between 60 - 80 per cent of processed foods, is both heavily sprayed with the chemical glyphosate *and* genetically engineered to resist glyphosate so that only unwanted plants are killed. Genetically modified maize was found to be the cause of the death of North American Monarch butterflies. Pollen from the maize, which had been engineered to protect it against 'pests' ... killed off the larvae of the butterfly which feeds off the plant (*The Ecologist* 1999, 241-242). In my own experience some Australian farmers no longer remove weeds but spray the total area of their paddock with 'Round-up' (Glyphosate).

Across Europe, farmland wildlife - especially birds - has been in decline for decades, long before GM crops caught the eye of pressure groups. The problem has been caused by a combination of effects, including intensive farming practices, the ripping up of hedgerows, and the use of highly toxic chemicals. As Carson forecast, birds have been vanishing. The percentage decline in Britain from 1971-1995 is: Tree sparrow 89%, Corn Bunting 80%, Turtle Dove 79%, Bullfinch 75%, Reed bunting 61%, Linnet 49% (*New Scientist*, July 4,1999, 3).

pesticides (cited in Hynes 1989,127). The Velsicol Chemical Corporation - sole manufacturer of chordane and heptaclor - along with hundreds of others, attacked Carson and *Silent Spring* and tried to stop the book's publication (Hynes 1989,115). The chemical giant, Monsanto, produced a parody of *Silent Spring* It published *The Desolate Year* in which failure to use pesticides causes a plague of insects to devastate America (Stauber & Rampton 1995, 124).[225] It withdrew advertising and financal support from journals and media programs that favourably reviewed Carson's book. One corporate scientist dedicated all his waking hours to crusading against the book and for pesticides. He charged that *Silent Spring* was 'littered with crass assumptions' and would cause famine and death (cited in Hynes 1989, 1). As Sophie Poklewski Koziell writes, Carson was almost silenced when one company sought an injunction to prevent the sale of her book. The injuction failed but the attacks continued (1999, 38). These attacks were invariably made by men representing the chemical industry, whilst support for

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[225] *The Ecologist* dedicated an issue to Monsanto's activities (1998, 249-324). In one section the authors take a close look at their record, ask 'the simple question: Can we allow corporations like Monsanto to gamble with the very future of life on Earth?' 'The giant Monsanto tells us in its recent advertisements that genetic engineering is all about feeding the world, about protecting the environment. But this is the company that brought us Agent Orange, PCBs and Bovine Growth Hormone; the same company that produces Roundup, the world's biggest herbicide, and the highly questionable "Terminator Technology"'. (Steinbrecher and Pat Roy Mooney, 1998, 249).
Monsanto continue their attempts to silence writers who expose their anti-ecological activities. Recently (March 2000) two journalists from Florida, Jane Akre and Steve Wilson, stayed in my home. They were travelling Australia and New Zealand to tell the story of what happened to them when they told the truth about BGH (bovine growth hormone). These award winning journalists had spent years preparing a story about this synthetic hormone and its detrimental effects on human health, milk and cattle. They became 'whistleblowers' after Monsanto endeavoured to 'gag' them by insisting that they change their story. After they adapted their text more than 80 times the journalists were fired from their jobs with Fox Television because they still told the truth. The journalists refused two offers of money (approximately $300,000 each) and were forced to sell their home. No longer can they find work as investigative reporters, and their finances are rapidly becoming depleted. By repeating stories such as these - with the authenticity that reception theory insists upon for its validity - wherever and whenever possible, the expensive public relation campaigns of corporations become undermined. This too is a function of ecocriticism. The site for further information regarding Akre and Wilson is www.foxBGH.suit.com.

Carson's claims could not be presumed from government departments whose job it was to protect communities. A member of the Federal Pest Control Board is quoted as saying: 'I thought she was a spinster. What's she so worried about genetics for' (cited in Hynes 1989, 115).

Story-telling, then, can also be used to counter, embroider, or suppress truth. Today virulent *anti*-environmentalism is on the rise, propelled by some of the same industries and public relation (PR) practitioners who battled Carson.[226] To counter corporate slander others took up Carson's story, adding what they had learnt in the tradition of story-telling. In *Our Stolen Future* (1996) and *The Feminization of Nature* (1997) Theo Colburn, Deborah Cadbury, and others, continued Carson's detective work.[227] They were able to answer questions about the malformation and 'feminization' of wildlife and the disrupting effects of synthetic chemicals on human reproductive systems and immune systems, and those of other species. These women told tragic stories but, as well as increasing people's awareness and understanding, they contributed to a body of work which tells us who the major culprits are and what can be done to change polluting and deadly habits. Their stories do not yet have the happy endings that ecofeminists would welcome, but Carson, Colburn and Cadbury are examples of writers who have pointed the way towards alternative, life-

[226]According to Stauber and Rampton, PR experts at Burson Marsteller, Ketchum, Shandwick, Bruce Harison and other firms, are waging and winning a war against environmentalists on behalf of corporate clients in the chemical, energy, food, automobile, forestry and mining industries. Pressure from environmental groups and individuals has, however, also brought about corporate changes. Whether or not these perceived changes are genuine and successful in the long term is debated by Stauber and Rampton, but what is clear is that multi-national corporations attempted to undermine the power of story-tellers such as Carson by their use of parody (*The Desolate Year*), and by the deceptive practise of 'greenwashing' (1995,123-142).

[227]*Our Stolen Future* is described on the cover as a 'Scientific Detective Story'.

sustaining possibilities by exposing toxic mazes. Carson, in particular, emphasised the interconnectedness of life and the wonders of evolution in her story-telling.

The basic premise in *Silent Spring* - that nothing in nature exists alone - is now generally accepted, at least in scientific circles. Patricia Hynes, in *The Recurring Silent Spring,* reminds us of Aldo Leopold's description of the interconnected journey of atom X locked in a limestone ledge:

> A bur oak root pried the rock and, after a century of cracking and dissolving, freed the atom. X was drawn into the bur oak tree and helped form a flower, which became an acorn, which fattened a deer, which fed a person, all in a single year (Hynes 1989, 97).

We are now experiencing the truth of interconnected sequences in the 'web of life' that affect living beings but are not immediately visible. Toxins, like the atom, also take time to reveal themselves. But warnings continue into the twenty-first century, species are increasingly endangered by pollution caused by humans, mainly because of an increasing use of chemicals - in war, industrial processes, the building industry, and the home and its environment. According to findings based on several countries' research, hormone-disrupting, man-made chemicals are affecting our fertility and that of our children. In *Our Stolen Future,* Colburn *et al* (1996, vii) trace the history of warnings and evidence that links synthetic chemicals to aberrant behaviour and reproductive problems, with implications for humans as well as wildlife. The publication contains a foreword by American Vice-President Al Gore, in which he states the following:

> Although scientists are just beginning to explore the implications of this research, initial animal and human studies link these chemicals

> to myriad effects including low sperm counts, infertility; genital deformities; hormonally triggered cancers, such as those of the breast and prostate gland; neurological disorders in children, such as hyperactivity and deficits in attention; and developmental and reproductive problems in wildlife (Colburn *et al* 1996, vii).[228]

Pesticides are just one group of chemicals which, Carson warned, can lead to an increase in the 'endogenous' oestrogens, those produced by the body itself. Added to this is the wide variety of synthetic oestrogens to which we are increasingly exposed - those in cosmetics, drugs, foods, and occupational exposures. The combined effect, Carson wrote, 'is a matter that warrants the most serious concern'(1991, 209).[229]

There *is* a growing concern that a range of natural and synthetic chemicals such as PCB's and Dioxins and those contained in certain foods, detergents, and plastic, can disrupt the body's delicate hormonal balance. Increasing evidence suggests a link between increased human exposure to chemicals which mimic oestrogen hormones and cause sexual development disorders, reduced fertility and cancers in both men and women (Colburn, 1996; Cadbury 1997; Steingraber, 1998).[230] The increased incidence of cancer and the impact of hormone-disrupting chemicals has resulted in ways

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[228] Dr. Theo Colburn, a senior scientist of the World Wildlife Fund, reports: 'It isn't just one product that's causing the problem. It's a host of products. It's the construction materials that we are using, it's the plastics we're using. It's not only the pesticides and it's not only the chemicals that we've released in the past that we've banned and restricted, but they're still out there' (*Ecologia* Newsletter Sept/Oct 1994).

[229] See also chapters 'Through a Narrow Window','One In Four', and 'Nature Fights Back' (Carson 1991, 65).

[230] Sandra Steingraber, is a biologist and poet, who works on the United States goverment's National Action Plan on Breast Cancer. She contracted cancer of bladder when she was twenty years old. Steingraber tells her own story and continues Carson's work in her book, *Living Downstream: an ecologist looks at cancer in the environment* (1998). She documents the rises in cancers (those that are not related to smoking, a known cause of cancer)and states: 'the rise is gradual, steady, and real. What seems imperceptible from the ground - percentage changes that unfold over miles or over decades - is plainly revealed by graphs of the data' (1998, 44).

Carson forecast (1991, 208-9): 'Transgenerational damage such as damage to the reproductive systems of young children, really is a threat to the human species' (Colburn, 1994). Yet this devastating, well researched work does not win media headlines with well-informed follow up. Outside academic and scientific circles, the research has not impacted on imaginations in such a way that individuals, governments and corporations consider future possibilities and *act* in combined response to reduce use of toxic chemicals. As Gore points out, the mounting evidence is part of a scientific case that is still emerging. But he goes on to say:

> ... we waited too long to ask the right questions about the CFCs that eventually attacked the ozone layer, and we are going too slow in addressing the threat of climate change. We certainly waited too long to ask the right questions about PCBs, DDT, and other chemicals, now banned, that presented serious human health risks (Gore, cited in Colburn *et al* 1996, vii).

In 'How To Heal A Lobotomy' Brian Swimme puzzles over the lack of adequate response to news of ecological disasters, in particular, statements made in 1986 at a scientific conference organised by the U.S.'s most prestigious scientific organisations - the Smithsonian Institution and the National Academy of Sciences. He repeats three statements that had vital implications for humanity but only reached page 28 in the *New York Times*:

> E.O Wilson claimed that our accelerating extinction spasm now takes at least 10,000 species each year and the numbers will increase rapidly in the next century. Ecologist Paul Ehrlich predicted that in its folly, 'humanity will bring upon itself consequences depressingly similar to those expected from a nuclear winter.' And in biologist Norman Myer's estimate, our assault on the Earth constitutes the worst trauma life has suffered in all its billion years of existence (Swimme 1990, 15,16).

If news of life's termination is not fit for the front page, Swimme

asks, what possibly could be? The patriarchal mind-set of our culture he sees as very similar to a frontal lobotomy which leaves us with only a sliver of our original minds operative. 'Trapped inside our mind splinter, *we are unable to see what is right before us*,' Swimme says. This myopia is a theme of *Blade Runner*, with its consequence 'of humanity bringing upon itself consequences depressingly similar to those expected from a nuclear winter'. (Swimme 1990, 15).

Backgrounded in the film is the chain of actions and inactions which contribute to its base dystopian metaphor of 'accelerated decrepitude' of individuals, species, and place. The mélange of time and place and references to architecture and fashions of the 1940s conjures memories of one of the blackest periods of human history: the 'Fall' of humanity, linked with war and the domination of people perceived as a subhuman enemy and therefore as subjects for brutality and experimentation in the Nazi eugenics programme, the concentration camps, the gas chambers, and as targets for nuclear bombs. Scientific experimentation, vivisection, and the control of individuals and nonhuman species by humans can be seen as a warring process against those who are different, the 'other'; a scientific and technological warring process, waged particularly since the Enlightenment's 'Masculine Birth of Time', the time of Francis Bacon and the growth of rationality, the use of animals for vivisection, and the persecution of natural healers and witches (Merchant 1983). This warring process continues to occur when humans separate themselves from the animism of the earth and the feelings of the nonhuman of the world in a myopic quest for human progress, and as humans distance themselves from

other humans by viewing the 'Other' as the enemy.

Blade Runner implies that transnational corporations can be destroyers of healthy and diverse community life ('accelerated decrepitude') when they push profitable artificial processes and unnecessary goods. Scott's replicants could well be a reality by the year 2019. Genetic engineers, having cloned Dolly the sheep, a monkey, and scores of mice, are, by the same methods, well on the way to being able to clone humans and spare parts for body surgery (Postman 1999, 30; *New Scientist* 19/26 December, 1998, 23).[231] Sperm taken from a dead man have been successfully used to fertilise his widow's eggs (*New Scientist* 19/26 December, 1998, 25). The Human Genome Project is well on the way to blueprinting the DNA of humanity with the rationale that 'sequencing our entire genome will help us get a better grasp of what makes humans tick biochemically' (*New Scientist* 2000, 5). According to Ho, 'The possibility of immortality is dangling from the horizons as the "longevity gene" is isolated' (1997, 153). We would be deluded, however, to believe that animals used for scientific experiments will not suffer,[232] that species will not continue to be lost, or that extinct creatures, like the Tasmanian Thylacine, and the habitats they need, can be recovered.[233]

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[231] It took 300 tries for scientists to get one success - Dolly - but no mention is made of the vast number of embryos that failed. Ho asks,' is that ethical?' (1997, 153). Dolly is already experiencing the problems of 'accelerated decrepitude'. She has become geriatric before her time (Labes 1999, 254).

[232] Meg Gordon, reporting for *New Scientist* wrote: '... cloning by embryo division has a tendency to create sheep and cows that are born up to twice the normal size. This strange phenomenon has already led to the downfall of one cow cloning company, Granada Genetics of Houston, Texas, because the mother cows could not deliver their calves. Transgenic mistakes can be unpleasant for the animal. One example is the infamous 'Beltsville pig", which was engineered by researchers at the US Depatment of Agriculture, Beltsville, Maryland, to produce human growth hormone in an effort to stimulate growth and reduce fat on the animal. The hormone succeeded in making the pig grow faster without extra food, but it suffered terribly from side effects incuding severe bone and joint problems (26 April, 1997, 17).

David Ehrenfeld believes the causes of a decline in the love of diversity are because we have 'abandoned our fascination with the specific' and are more concerned with the general. He writes that in the modern scientific-technical process the specific is usually subordinate to the general and is considered the work of lesser scientific intellects and technicians:

> Yet the 'cutting edge' in biology is now popularly thought to be genetic engineering, a science and a technology that take advantage of the uniformity of the genetic code to toss all organisms into the same grab bag of genes. Most of the genes in this bag are considered trash; a few are withdrawn to be inserted as supposedly useful parts into a small number of recipient organisms such as milk cows or wheat. Here is generality taken to the last degree. Although genetic engineering often does not work as well as its glittering promises, the proof of its power is that genetic engineers now command higher salaries and more political clout than any previous generation of Western biologists (1993, 115-6).

But what of the scientific drive that does *not* become intoxicated by ambition and the pursuit of fame; the science that brings beneficial applications of technology? Deckard, in his job to chase down replicants that have become a threat to corporate hierarchy, says: '*they can either be a benefit or a hazard. If they're a benefit they're no concern of mine*'. This is one of the most important lines in the film. The same can be said of science and technology. Science and technology can be a benefit or, if prudence and compassion are not used, a hazard.

Mae-Wan Ho expresses her concerns regarding genetic engineering biotechnology, which she believes is 'inherently hazardous':

> It could lead to disasters far worse than those caused by accidents to

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[233] A $60 million project to resurrect the extinct Tasmanian Tiger began in February, 2000 (Rose 2000, 3).

> nuclear installations ... genes can replicate indefinitely, spread and recombine. For this reason the release of a genetically engineered micro-organism that is lethal to humans could well spell the end of humanity. Unfortunately the proponents of this terrifying technology share a genetic determinist mindset that leads them to reject the inherently dangerous nature of their work. What is particularly worrying at first sight is the irresistible power of the large corporations which are pushing this technology (Ho 1997, 152).

The point that *Blade Runner* makes is that it is the lack of *responsible* action by those with power that is the problem: science and technology used for profitable purposes rather than ecological benefit; the 'colonisation' of the habitat of others; and the poisoning of earth and space.[234] Sebastian's decrepitude is a metaphor for the combined failure of science and technology to prevent diseases and rapid environmental decline, whilst continuing to master the ability to radically alter life. It is left to the spectator to imagine the combination of disasters that have brought the imaginary world of *Blade Runner* to such a miserable state. The film's speculation is not to be confused with scientific evidence. However, *Blade Runner*'s tragedy - *its scenario of humanity reaching the end of a chain of actions* - provokes questioning of our contemporary scenario: not only 'may [it] easily become a stark reality we all shall know' (Carson 1991, 125-337) but, in many respects, it is the stark reality we *now* know. Pollution is global. Species are rapidly becoming extinct. Human fertility is declining.[235] Artificial means

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[234] According to Stauber and Rampton 'today, agrichemical poisoning of our soil, wind, water, food and bodies is a worldwide environmental health threat. Supermarket surveys find that most foods in the US are routinely contaminated with one or more pesticide residues, and in Third World countries the use of dangerous chemicals is even more widespread. The US ban on DDT hasn't stopped it from being manufactured and used elsewhere, and global use is now at an alltime high ... Evidence is emerging that DDT and other organochlorine pesticides mimic hormones, triggering sexual and physiological abnormalities in humans and animals' (1995, 124).

[235] Male impotence has been partly overcome with the introduction of Viagra, in spite of side effects such as fainting and blue-tinted vision and the reported deaths in the US of thirty-nine users (*New Scientist* December 19/26, 1998, 24).

of producing babies are increasing, with donor eggs, donor sperm, and surrogate mothers.[236]

Science fiction leads readers and viewers to relate events to their own lives, their own society. How do we *imagine* the kind of science and technology that will be used to counteract the long term effects of damage to the reproductive systems of animals, including *Homo sapiens*? Will we be an elite population increasingly able to reproduce artificially and extend life by the transfer of sperm, ova, cells and organs at the expense of the basic needs - like clean water - of the less fortunate other? Or, will there be some kind of utopian turn-around whereby governments, corporations, scientists and technologists accept (what they probably already know) that the health of people and the health of the planet are related; and that the *causes* of ill health need to be traced and treated, as well as the diseases? As Irene Diamond states in 'Babies, Heroic Experts, and a Poisoned Earth':

> ... the more we focus on the fertility problems of humans and ignore the ways in which humans are poisoning the Earth, the more we move toward a world where the complete and total control of baby-making by heroic experts is considered prudent and wise. Birth on a thoroughly poisoned Earth is likely to be so problematic that the choice of non-intervention will be totally lost (cited in Kahn 1990, 202).

The intervention that Diamond anticipates is likely to be cloned twin-like copies with technological intervention unrecognisable. Will we accept these cyborgian efforts to create and hold onto life in the same way that we have have accepted prosthetics, including

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[236] *The Age* reports the expanding business in donor eggs at the cost of around $US 25, 000 for medical assistance, advice and several eggs harvested from one of several American women listed in a Surrogate and Egg Donation Centre. Couples are flying to the US for donors eggs as it is illegal for them to be sold in Australia (1999, 5, 26).

machine hearts and the hearts of other animals; as we have also accepted *in-vitro* fertilisation, and embryonic transplants in post-menopausal women? The questions that arise through *Blade Runner*'s scenario are: when life as we know it becomes unacceptably changed because of our short-sightedness, will we go on imagining that there is hope for us elsewhere; or that, for the chosen few there will be a new world in which a Tyrell-like 'God' decides that the time has come to end this one? Will we create new metaphors for 'gods' or 'goddesses', in whom we will believe our future to rest?

One of Mary Shelley's strategies in her novel *Frankenstein,* a strategy which was to become a convention of the science fiction genre, was the narrative use of, or reference to, science and/or technology. In *Frankenstein,* scientific experimentation devoid of social responsibility leads to the making of a monster. The genre of science fiction has its genesis in Shelley's *Frankenstein.* Her monstrous creation was 'the first science fiction alien, a creature totally new to this world, the great, great grand-father of *Blade Runner*'s replicants and the cyborgs of the postmodern age' (Cranny-Francis, 1990, 220. Analogies between current scientific experiments and *Frankenstein* have been made by other literary critics, including Theodore Roszak. Shelley's 'cautionary novel', subtitled *The Modern Prometheus,* was written when she was only nineteen years old and pregnant. Her pregnancy is relevant. Roszak writes of her protagonist, Frankenstein: 'Victor's madness is designed to reveal a twisted sexual impulse'. He, like Tyrell in *Blade Runner,* 'means to appropriate the powers of procreation, the one most rooted in nurture, care and love'. At the time Mary was completing

the final chapters of her novel, her husband, Percy, was writing *Prometheus Unbound*. Roszak writes:

> Percy, an unrestrained scientific enthusiast, was in fact, Mary's model for Victor Frankenstein. In him she saw the same blazing gifted mind and the same lack of balance she attributed to young Frankenstein ... Percy's Prometheus was 'good, joyous, beautiful and free'. But Mary, more troubled than encouraged by her husband's infatuation with both rebellion and science, feared the demonic side of Promethian daring. Her reply was a moral hymn to prudence and compassion (1997, 184-9).

The mythological Titan, Prometheus, challenged and enraged the gods by stealing fire to bestow on humans. Fire enabled humans to make, amongst other beneficial things, weapons to subdue animals. Prometheus's act of hubris is also Frankenstein's and Tyrell's. Frankenstein desired to bestow on humans a gift for which they would thank him. Instead, his monstrous creation, desperately out of control, wreaks homicidal vengeance against his creator and those dear to him, just as Tyrell's technology also goes astray when Batty turns against his creator.

The Master I/Eye

> *"All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal him. ... Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see"* (Luke 10: 21-3).

The emphasis on eyes in the film is a reminder that one of science fiction's functions in mirroring contemporary attitudes and trends is to expose our own lives and societies, much of which we might prefer not to see, hence *Blade Runner*'s themes of myopia and blindness, and the Oedipal allusions to eyes in the film.[237] The huge eye screened almost subliminally at the start of the film gives

the impression of Big Brother, or God the Father, observing the activities of the city. Flames belched from the polluting chimney stacks in the infernal cityscape down below are reflected in the eye.

The central scene associated with eyes, the ego 'I' and the replicant/human desire for extended life takes place in Tyrell's inner sanctum, where Batty gains entry with the help of Sebastian. Angered by his tragedy of inbuilt obsolescence, Batty, like Frankenstein's monster and Oedipus of Thebes, kills his father. He smashes Tyrell's glasses, and pushes his eyes back into their sockets before crushing his skull.[238] Tyrell's thick-lensed glasses signify that he is myopic. This myopia and the dystopian context of the film make it apparent that Tyrell's world vision and his creations are flawed, that there is a loss of wisdom. His myopia becomes a precurser to blindness and death - Batty shortens the life of the man who curtails his own: as Barr writes it is an 'eye for an eye':

> [Batty] is ... concerned with the "I". When he confronts Tyrell, he is a member of one human species who desires to learn more about his "I" from a member of another human species. Upon discovering that his life is irrevocably finite, he retires his maker's "I" by destroying the man's eye. He ... successfully avenges the speciesism responsible for his suffering. He shortens the life of the man who purposefully shortened his own. Batty counters human speciesism by enforcing a new version of the rule "an eye for an eye": he destroys the eye and the "I" of a human who literally manufactures his own eye and "I" (Barr 1997, 27).

The viewer's eye becomes as important for the ongoing life of the film as the eyes on which the camera focuses in *Blade Runner*.

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[237] Blindness is ambiguous in mythology. For example Tiresias, the blind seer, in his inner darkness saw the destiny of Oedipus (Campbell 1988, 154).

[238] For a Lacanian reading of the Oedipus Complex see Caldwell (1999, 49).

Film is about *different ways of seeing*. The diverse contributions to *Blade Runner* described at the beginning of this chapter lead the viewer to deeper ways of imagining and observing. As in photography, film replicates what is seen through the camera's lens as virtual reality. However, the naive viewer may not realise that what they see in front of them is *not* real.[239]

Scott involves the viewer in a complicated kind of detective game of seeing and spying, the *double entendre* in the 'I spy' of critical analysis in which the viewer asks multiple questions, including what is real, what is truth, what is false? The process of seeing ourselves and our society reflected in the glass of science fiction is a mirroring that exposes the dark side of society and human nature as well as the light. Batty and Deckard, for example, could be seen as a double (Kerman 1997, 4-15; Francavilla 1999, 4-15). They do not mirror each other in sameness but reflect each other in difference: as *ego* and *alter ego*. Batty is a fairhaired Aryan figure and Deckard is his opposite, in hair and attire. Images of hero and anti-hero, human and nonhuman, blur with this doubling.

Replicants can only be identified by what Dick, in his novel, calls 'Voight Kampff' eye tests. They are tests which register responses to memory and empathy testing questions. The presumed difference between the human and the nonhuman is that replicants have not had time for memory to develop, or emotions associated with memory, to register in their eyes: Scott said of the replicants' sometimes glowing eyes:

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[239] The Haitian girl seen in *Jesus of Montreal* and the Maori in *The Piano*, for example. The racism of this 'naivity' is noted in the relevant chapters.

> that kickback you saw from the replicants' retinas was a bit of a design flaw. I was also trying to say that the eye is really the most important organ in the human body. It's like a two-way mirror; the eye doesn't only see a lot, the eye gives away a lot. A glowing human retina seemed one way of stating that' (Sammon, 1996, 47).

The replicants' vision is quite different from that of other characters in the film, Tyrell's myopia and the contact-lensed eyes of the detective Gaff, for example. Batty says to Chew, maker of eyes for the Nexus-6 replicants, *if only you could see what I've seen with your eyes.* Not only is Batty able to *see* and know more than Tyrell (for example in the scene where he 'check-mates' Tyrell), he also is able to *feel* more and to know the tragedy of his limited life-span. We observe this in the scene where Batty embraces the replicant Pris after her 'death', and again in his last minute compassionate act to save Deckard.

There is the ever-watchful corporate or God-the-Father eye seen early in the film; but Scott would have been aware during the making of *Blade Runner* that as *auteur* the master eye is his. He is the critical overseer who, together with Syd Mead, a 'visual futurist', imagined the inferno-like environment through which characters move (Sammon 1996, 75-76). His is the all-powerful decision-making eye that would have stayed close to the camera to ensure that his detailed vision was adhered to - as much as is possible with all the unknowns of film-making.[240] Scott leaves many interpretations available to the viewer. The notion of a technological or God-the Father eye - rather than a detective-Blade Runner eye, or a replicant eye - could well have been part

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[240] These 'unknowns' are described in '"There's some of me in you": *Blade Runner* and the adaptation of science fiction literature into film' (Landon 1997, 90-102).

of Scott's plan for filmic tension. Inhabitants of a dystopic world would suffer discomfort and fear when not knowing who the watcher really is.

Reading the Signs

Signs in the film indicate destructive corporate practices and structures. Billboards flash their messages to the mostly Asian population. In one a continually smiling Japanese woman shows her 'enjoyment' as she steadily pops indigestion pills into her mouth. The logo of a Coca-Cola advertisement alternates with the slogan *Enjoy*. Irony is implied. How does one enjoy in a dying world when *PURGE* is an oppressive counter-sign? *Enjoy*, in flashing lights is a more disturbing and insistent image than the static printed word. It is a slogan that accompanies acquisition, whether it is Budweiser beer or Coca-Cola, a pill to reach a state of ecstasy, to relieve indigestion, or a Pan-Am flight. Someone is aiming to increase consumption and profitability - a manufacturer, a distributor, an advertiser, or a corporation.

Products advertised by multinational corporations become like 'the one immortal being' (Ehrenfeld 1993, 133),[241] illuminated, transcendental, ubiquitous, taking on unbelievable qualities to transform or improve an individual's life. Signs such as golden

[241] David Ehrenfeld describes a corporation as an invisible, intangible artificial being, a legal entity in which 'the mere creature of law possesses only those properties which the charter of its creation confers upon it, either expressly, or incidental to its very existence. Among the most important are immortality, and, if the expression may be allowed, individuality: properties, by which a perpetual succession of many persons are considered the same, and may act as a single individual'. It is, Ehrenfeld writes, chiefly for the purpose of clothing bodies of men in succession with these qualities and capacities that corporations were invented and are in use. By these means, a perpetual succession of individuals are capable of acting for the promotion of the particular object, like one immortal being' (1993,133).

arch of McDonalds at the gateway of many cities welcome consumers to the paradise of hamburger world. Advertisers know how to appeal to needs and values, particularly our basic bodily requirements of food, drink, health, and sex. As the pill-popping woman of the billboard advertisement in *Blade Runner* reminds us, advertisements regularly show healthy looking models seductively, and suggestively, placing objects into their mouths. Sex, healthy bodies, and food, are combined for advertising appeal: chocolate bars entering reddened lips are filmed close-up. Coca-Cola is drunk by athletes, party goers, magnificent dancers, bronzed surfers, all clichéd in their frenetic laughing, smiling, 'enjoyment'[242] - with a (phallic) bottle in the hand or mouth. Increased possibilities of pleasurable feelings and sexual intercourse are implicit in the kind of advertising described. But Coca-Cola has a more insidious corporate scheme than that of increasing sales by sexual implications - a scheme to take over the world. Donella Meadows, shocked by what she read in Adbusters Magazine, quotes the cover of the company's 1997 report:

> The first page says '47 Million to Go'. The second page clarifies the plan: 'This year, even as we sell 1 billion servings of our products daily, the world will still consume 47 billion servings of other beverages. We're just getting started' (Meadows 1999, 44).[243]

Annette Rottenberg writes about the persuasive appeal of advertising slogans that are heavily dependent on the connotations associated with products:

[242] The archaic meaning of 'enjoy' is to have sexual intercourse.

[243] In a double page spread Coke images the kind of landscape for an expanding market and the people they are targeting (Chinese women), with the words: 'In many places its easier to find a water fountain than a Coca-Cola. That's why we continue to strengthen our distribution system. We're working hard to make our products an *integral part of any landscape* so they are always within easy reach' (Meadows 1999, 44).

> Wherever evidence is scarce or non-existent, the advertiser must persuade us through skillful choice of words and phrases (as well as pictures), especially those that produce pleasurable feelings. 'Coke - it's the real thing.' 'Real' - as opposed to artificial or natural - sounds like a desirable quality. But what is real about Coke? (Rottenberg 1991, 192).

In our own society there are corporate pressures to achieve ends that work against human and planetary well-being. In *The Absence of the Sacred,* Jerry Mander writes that the unfeeling response of corporations to environmental damage and community health is related to a concern with profits; the growth imperative; competition and aggression; the amorality of *not being human or having feelings;* the disloyalty of corporations (like Coca-Cola) who outlive their creator without commitment to locale, employees or neighbours; and the homogenisation that encourages us to all live in a similar manner, consuming the same products (Mander 1992, 123-137). Any challenges to their products or mode of operation can be obscured by Public Relations, with its aim to soothe an anxious public. Mander describes what could well be corporate preparation for Offworlds: Disneyland, where anxieties are presumably erased in the theme parks of artificiality.[244] Disney's claim, according to Mander, is to help people who are uncertain about changes, or

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[244] The Disneyland that Ramona Fernandez (1995, 236-254) and Mander write about is the EPCOT Center, Orlando, Florida. EPCOT is an acronym for Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (Fernandez 1995, 236-254; Mander 1992, 152-157). It is ten times the size of Southern California's Disneyland, and covers 27,000 acres. This impeccable self-contained universe is divided into four areas, one of which is the Vacation Kingdom which is totally devoted to pleasure and contains hotels, golf courses, artificial lakes, water paradises, and artificial beaches. In the Horizons pavillion, the General Electric Corporation wishes visitors to feel comfortable with 'computor-controlled, worker-free, genetically engineered crops.' Kraft Foods Corporation's vision is one of 'better seeds, better pesticides, and better techniques ... [of] Controlled Environment Agriculture ... Nature by itself [the corporation claims] is not always so productive' (Mander 1992, 152). There are exhibits in the New Horizon Pavillion of totally mechanised farming, plant species being developed without the waste of trunks or branches; fruit that grows directly from plastic tubes; new species, fed by an automatic, computor-controlled spray, which need no soil in which to grow (Mander 1992, 152).

feel intimidated by futuristic environments and seemingly complex systems. 'The corporations and the technologies are there 'to make our lives better'; Disney promises, 'to make a dream come true' (Mander 1992, 152).

Conclusion

> Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall.
> He will end by destroying the earth - Albert Schweitzer

Scott's mainstream film extends beyond entertainment to a political critique of today's society, but it is not surprising that he leaves the concerned viewer to consider ways out of the dystopian mess he presents. Corporate propaganda for *Blade Runner*'s Offworld promises to make a dream come true, with a future better than the present, but this, Scott suggests, is the empty promise of corporate hubris, an endeavour to convince humans that the total mastery of nonhuman nature is possible and that humanity can create new worlds better than the old. A new-world future contains little hope for the continuation of the world's remaining species as we know them when the 'natural' becomes indistinguishable from the artificial, the copy from the original, and the human from the clone.

It is difficult not to be adversely affected by the questions that the wasteland scenario of *Blade Runner* raises, especially when there are already signs of equivalent ecological degradation in some major cities, and by 2019 they are unlikely to be greatly improved.[245] From an ecocritical perspective, however, some hope is essential

[245] Although major changes could come about with drastic governmental intervention in road transport, for example by keeping cars out of cities, no car days in cities, and conversion to electric vehicles, particularly taxis and other public transport.

if change for the better is to come about - the changes that Carson worked for, for example. However change will not occur if hope is relegated to faith in another world, the Offworlds of our imaginations.

My reading of the film is a conservative one, not one that welcomes 'a happy marriage of humans and machines' (Ryan and Kellner 1988, 251) but, instead, recognises the need for caution when approaching new technologies such as genetic engineering. Even though *Blade Runner* (particularly the 1982 version of the film) does deconstruct certain ideological oppositions at work in more conservative technological films - by undercutting the depiction of nature as an opposite to negative technological civilizations (Ryan and Kellner 1988, 251) - the 'Director's Cut' casts doubt on the 'happy marriage of humans and machines' with the intimations in the film that the 'marriage' between Deckard and Rachael is of two replicants. This marriage is unlikely to be happy when replicants, presumably, are still under the control of humans who decide when, where, and how they are to expire.[246] Rachael's future with Deckard is as uncertain as his own. 'Too bad she won't live - but then again who does?' This truism from Gaff is his last message to the escaping couple. Deckard nods his acceptance. Replicant or human, Rachael and Deckard (the virgin and the unicorn) unite, but their deaths, like those of any mortals, can only temporarily be escaped.

The 'Conclusion' of the thesis which follows seeks some optimism with the awareness that the content of the films discussed mirrors much of the human cruelty and oppression of the human and

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[246] The replicants, however, are genetically engineered (Tyrell is the god of biomechanics); they are not battery operated machines as they are in Dick's novel.

nonhuman 'other' that still exists today. Theses writers struggle with their endings as film-makers do, to avoid clichéd over optimistic endings. Pioneers like Carson and other ecologists, writers and direct activists mentioned in the thesis, sustain hopefulness by their ongoing work against destructive practices. When the general media repeat ecologically aware stories, information, and warnings,[247] individuals, communities and governments, begin to respond, particularly when their awareness is increased by local pollution or ecologically adverse situations.

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[247] This week (April 10-17, 2000) Australia's national and local media reached millions of people with stories relating to ecological disasters but with mostly positive and empowering outcomes brought about by individual's action. The most popular mainstream film showing in Hobart (Tasmania) and highly recommended by critics, is *Erin Brokovitch* (US), based on the true story of the woman after whom the film is named. *Brokovitch* was mostly responsible for winning a long legal battle against a corporation responsible for chromium pollution which brought polluted water, cancer and general ill-health to hundreds of residents living nearby. Australian national television (ABC) ran a peak time three part serial, *Nature Boy* (BBC), which included (1) wild animals and ecological themes, and (2) a story based on the pollution of a town by a nearby factory and a PR woman's whistle blowing (the third part is still to come). In *The Sunday Tasmanian*, Dr James Wright cited the *Lancet* in his regular column. He outlined 'The Perils of Pesticides', in relation to infertility: 'Investigation over a recent eight-year period covering 836 couples revealed an ominous trend. The male was the culprit (sic) in 330 cases. The cause? Exposure to chemicals, with pesticides heading the list. Many of the men were dairy, livestock or poultry farmers or contractors' (Wright, 2000, 28). Also, this week the federal government ran a clean water campaign with advertisements in all states on prime time television.

Conclusion

Beware my body and my soul
Beware above all of crossing your arms
and assuming the sterile attitude of the spectator
because life is not a spectacle - Aimé Césaire[248]

The aim of the thesis - and a function of ecocriticism - has been to examine the roles of humans and nonhuman nature in texts in an endeavour to discover some of their effects on our culture and ecology. Reception theory assesses the accumulating and interactive dialogues within these texts from the perspectives of the viewer and reader as well as the author. Stories do indeed have power, but what became increasingly clear in the study is that stories can have both positive and adverse affects on species and the planet. There are stories and counter-stories in the politics of story-telling. Those constantly repeated are the ones that we tend to believe, as advertisers, public relations experts and multi-national corporations are aware.[249] The manipulation of stories is evident in *The Crucible* in which sacred books and treatises are used to provide false evidence against those suspected of withcraft. The fallibility of the persecutors in *The Crucible,* and Oscar's ill-placed Christian faith in *Oscar and Lucinda,* demonstrates the power of story, particularly biblical stories, to lead the dogmatic, the gullible and the gambler astray. Biblical stories belonging to the 'old country' and the past are shown to fail when they are told in other, far more ancient countries, with their own stories related

[248]Cited in *The Reenchantment of Art* (Gablik 1991, 113).

[249] Stauber and Rampton's title, *Toxic Sludge Is Good For You* (1995), parodies the kind of claims that public relation companies are paid to repeat in a variety of ways to 'greenwash' a product - like toxic sludge - that is obviously harmful.

to different soils, species and evironments.

The Church performs an oppressive role in each of these films, by accusing people of witchcraft at Salem; and condemning Daniel and eccentric or nonconformist characters like Oscar, Lucinda, and Hasset. Ada' s rebellion is against the oppressions that women suffered during the Victorian era. These characters, overtly and covertly, are condemned for failing to live according to particular and dominant variants of Christian dogma, dogma that holds that sex is sinful, women and nature are the lesser 'other' and that a saviour will return to save humanity from its sins.

In each of the films discussed, there are Christian ministers whose job it is to spread God's (unchanged) word. But these men are shown to be flawed characters: the Reverend Parris in *The Crucible*; Bishop Dancer and the Reverends Hasset, Dight and Hopkins in *Oscar and Lucinda*; the blood-thirsty Reverend in *The Piano*; and the Church elders, including Leclerc, in *Jesus of Montreal*. The exception is *Blade Runner*. There is no Christian minister in *Blade Runner's* future world. God is dead and goddesses are mostly forgotten. Hence the film's nostalgia. To believe no longer that there is a god can be a fearful thing. The film's ending with the last minute Christanisation of Batty is an attempt to counter fear of godlessness[250] with hope in a heavenly God and in the hereafter.

The manipulation of story is most evident in *Jesus of Montreal* as Arcand juxtaposes religious, pornographic, and past and present stories with biblical and scientific creation stories and institutional

[250] This is the fear that causes the Dostoevsky character in *Jesus of Montreal* to commit suicide.

propaganda. *Jesus of Montreal* is subversive because Arcand demonstrates the ways in which stories change - and must change. He exposes the ways in which old stories, that belonged to a certain time, place and understanding, have different meanings today. Arcand aids the viewer's understanding of the evolution of stories and cosmology by paralleling scientific and religious stories, and enabling the viewer to see the roles that institutions have in their construction and adaptation.

In *The Piano* story-telling and language are used in several intertextual ways: the relating of Ada's story; Campion's allusions to mythology; the retelling of *Bluebeard*; and the fantasies that Flora invents. Flora 'tells stories' to compensate for a lost father and a mute mother. Ada's muteness forces the observant viewer to notice literacy and illiteracy, speech and silence, and the different languages with which Campion experiments: Maori speech; parodied English (when the Maori girls sing the English national anthem); the language of music, of fingers, bodies and eyes; of smouldering trees, entrapping vines, daunting cliffs, moody sea, and the mud that becomes antagonist.

An essential component of ecocriticism is to note the obviously, and not so obviously, oppressed, as well as the missing 'other' in texts. In each of the five films discussed here there are stories of oppressors and oppressed, and each signals - albeit covertly - a developing consciousness of European subjugation of others in colonised worlds. Institutional, corporate and colonial oppressions bring substandard life to many characters, including the 'chickenheads', the 'little people', and the replicants in *Blade*

Runner. The poor and hungry are scavenging on the rubbish-littered streets in *Blade Runner*. Everyone is oppressed who lives on the lower levels of the polluted city and even those who work for Tyrell are unable to be sure of their positions in a society where everyone is watching someone else, and personal identity has become a mystery known only by those who work close to Tyrell.

The oppressed are not only the human and nonhuman other of *Blade Runner*, and the indigenous people of invaded countries, but also the female characters in *The Crucible*. Tituba, a black woman, is the first to be condemned of witchcraft. Indians are not seen in *The Crucible* - their sufferings are not part of Miller's story - but, significantly, they are mentioned as the murderers of Abigail's parents. In *Oscar and Lucinda* the few Aborigines that we see suffer as the land suffers; similarly, Maori people, culture and land are affected by European colonisation in *The Piano*. The oppressed in *Jesus of Montreal* are the unemployed and hungry people who eat in the soup kitchen where Constance works; the sick and the dying who are unable to obtain proper treatment in hospital; and the women and men who are demeaned by both advertising executives and their pornographic work.

The manner in which films portray end of twentieth century and 'new millennium' understandings of environmental crises has been explored, mainly in the chapters on *Jesus of Montreal* and *Blade Runner* chapters. This issue and others raised by Glotfelty have been addressed. Additional questions applying to film expanding the interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism to include ecological film criticism, are also considered. The spiritual or religious ways

in which characters identify with the Universe have been explored in all the chapters, as have the filmic visions for the destiny of humans and other inhabitants of the planet. The interdisciplinary nature of ecocritical studies is implicit throughout the thesis, as issues relating to film, religion, ethics, history, literary, cultural, and feminist studies, are explored in the chapters. Values expressed in the films have been examined in each of the chapters for 'their consistency with ecological wisdom' (ecosophy). Metaphors of the land - starting with an exploration of metaphor itself in *Il Postino* - have been examined. Concepts of wilderness, wildness, and nature have been discussed in relation to each of the films.

'Place' is recognised in the thesis as playing a vital role in story-telling, even though the five films examined are anthropocentric and concerned primarily with people rather than place. Particularly noted by critics was the scenic beauty in the cinematography of the Antipodean productions, *Oscar and Lucinda* and *The Piano,* but less apparent was their attention to industrial landscapes,and the loss of the wild.

Establishing shots in *The Piano* and *Blade Runner* depict the extreme contrasts of city and wilderness: The setting for *The Piano* being the wildest of any of the films and *Blade Runner*'s the most technological. This is not a contrast of utopian New Zealand, and dystopian Los Angeles, worlds. The wildness of the sea, the forest, and the cliffs are threatening, not utopian, when seen through the immigrant eyes of Flora and Ada. The 'silent spring' of *Blade Runner's* degraded world is a postmodern world of technical 'progress' gone astray, hence its dystopia. Scott positions Tyrell

as a failed god-monster corporate leader, and such a strategy is subversive, working against contemporary ideologies of unconstrained 'progress' in science and technology. Ideas of what it means to be human and what it means to be nonhuman are explored in the *Blade Runner* chapter with underlying compassion expressed in the film for the different or nonhuman 'other' affected by corporate 'progress': the replicants with their inbuilt obsolescence, 'chicken heads', 'little people', and workers manufacturing body parts for Tyrell Corporation.

Questions about the effects of corporate advertising and public relations have also been explored in the thesis, particularly in relation to the postmodern films*Blade Runner* and *Jesus of Montreal.* In these films environmental degradation increases and public services decrease. The 'environmental crisis' that has seeped into contemporary culture is expressed by film-makers in themes of alienation and social disturbance as populations - other than indigenous and nonhuman populations - noticeably expand over the centuries, and the gap between the rich and the poor becomes wider and more evident.

In both *Oscar and Lucinda* and *The Piano,* journeys are major themes. They function as a device by which directors are able to depict places variously: as familiar and beloved; as new places seen with new eyes; or places seen with myopic eyes. In *The Crucible,* the Puritans of Salem found that their New America was not the Eden that they imagined. In *Blade Runner,* the dream inherent in 'Los Angeles' is finally and irretrievably lost. Oscar, in *Oscar and Lucinda,* travels myopically from his home in England

to Sydney and then to the outback of New South Wales; Lucinda returns to her home in New South Wales from England; Ada travels from Scotland to New Zealand's wild shores. The relationship of people with place is most evident in *The Piano* as characters become associated with the environments in which they move. The settlement of Australian and New Zealand land by Europeans, well under way by the mid-nineteenth century, has romantic overtones in both stories. Beneath the romance, though, is the savagery inflicted upon the land and indigenous people. Campion more than any of the other directors makes clear the important link between the treatment of the land and the treatment of women.

Each film portrays a love story which, from an evolutionary and commercial point of view, is not surprising. What makes the films interesting from an ecological and evolutionary perspective - apart from their settings - is that most of the protagonists make choices that eventually contribute to supportive, or more peaceful relations in their societies. Life, for most of the films' protagonists, improves when characters make choices that bring some harmony and peace to their lives and the lives of others. Proctor decides to tell the truth; he dies because of this, but his act is a catalyst for change and peace in the village. Lucinda chooses to become the mother of Oscar's son. Ada settles in Nelson, New Zealand, with the man of her choice - not her father's. Mireille, with a new outlook learnt from the Passion Play and her association with Daniel, walks into the dawn of a new day and a new life; Rachael and Deckard prepare to leave to find their own way on Earth, not Offworld; and most of the antagonists in the films are defeated or killed in conventional, mainstream story-telling tradition.

The protagonists are also, on the whole, interestingly eccentric and, apart from Proctor, nonheroic in the Hollywood tradition of heroes. Generally they are not clichéd characters - the protagonists in *The Crucible* are an exception, as are *Blade Runner's*, but there is parody in Scott's treatment of characters which alludes to detective and *film noir* genres. Overall it is disappointing that indigenous characters play only minor roles and nonhuman species, other than horses and dogs, are not represented, except as replicants in *Blade Runner.*

There is little in any of the films that explicitly suggests that humans could choose alternative ways of living harmoniously with the land and indigenous people. Even Baines, the European 'gone native' in *The Piano*, who lives in voluntary simplicity with the Maori, seems to contribute nothing to their society. When he acts as an interpreter it is for Stewart's needs, not the Maori's, and when he takes up a new life it is in a city - and not with a Maori woman, but with Ada.

The *mise en scene* of *Blade Runner's* city brings the thesis to its conclusion. Scott's story - even though in many ways subversive - provides a sombre vision of a dystopian future that many may prefer not to recognise as the present: nonhuman species are extinct, Earth is dying and Offworld is the colonialist hope for the Eden of the elite. Depictions of Earth with 'accelerated decrepitude' as the metaphor for its condition is not at all hopeful for the planet, in spite of the film's last minute Christian imagery that suggests a saviour. It is, therefore, difficult for me to conclude in the comic

mode. This is the mode in which all ends well, or ends with hope in a new world - symbolised by a dove, a rainbow, an olive branch, a birth, or an embrace. In mythology and fairy story this may be satisfactory, but in some circumstances clichéd images of hope are delusory. They condone inertia when action is needed. Carson's words, quoted in the conclusion of the *Blade Runner* chapter, could well bring despair, particularly when religion and the Church, for many people, is no longer is a source of support, and when we are informed by leading scientists and ecologists that we are living unsustainably and could indeed end by destroying the Earth.

In a way, a thesis is like a film or a story, a conclusion is necessary but it must not steep the viewer or reader in despair. It is impossible to bring about the necessary changes for ecological health and well-being without enlightened optimism. How can opportunities be taken, or even seen, when pessimism is a mode of thinking? Understandable though it is, how can actions totally based on pessimism be successful? Derek Parfit, an Oxford philospher, ends his book, *Reasons and Persons*, a discussion related to ethics, on a cautious but more hopeful note than Carson, but with an important 'if':

> The earth will remain inhabitable for at least another billion years. Civilisation began only a few thousand years ago. *If* we do not destroy mankind [sic], these few thousand years may be only a fraction of the whole of civilized human history ... Belief in God, or in many gods, prevented the free development of moral reasoning. Disbelief in god, openly admitted by a majority, is a very recent event, not yet completed. Because this event is so recent, [n]on-religious ethics is at a very early stage. We cannot yet predict whether, as in mathematics, we will all reach agreement. Since we cannot know how [e]thics will develop, it is not irrational to have high hopes (cited in Singer, 1994, 15, italics mine).

These hopes are upheld by Singer (thesis 38) in his view that 'without

the sexually-obsessed morality of conservative Christianity, a humane and positive ethic could be the basis for a renewal of our social, political and ecological life' (Singer, 1994, 16-17).

Hierarchical and sexist attitudes of conservative members of the Church work against ecosophism by limiting the necessary awareness that is it *now*, in *this* world, that *we* must act - and act with sensitivity and feeling if we are to protect remaining species and habitats in all their beauty. Plumwood expresses the need to create stories different from the dominating ideologies of 'master texts', but she also is tentatively optimistic with her inclusion of the word 'If':

> The reason/nature story has been the master story of western culture. It is a story that has spoken mainly of conquest and control, of capture and use, of destruction and incorporation. This story is a disabling story. Unless we change it, some of those now young may know what it is to live amid the ruins of a civilised planet ... *If* we are to survive into a liveable future, we must take into our own hands the power to create, restore and explore different stories, with new main characters, better plots, and at least the possibility of some happy endings (Plumwood, 1993, 196, italics mine).

There is a yearning that many people share for stories in which the kind of spirituality evident in the Darwin and the worm story[251] is acknowledged in a world in which much is mysterious and wondrous in evolution. The conclusions reached in the thesis are not the didactic conclusions indicated in the studied films, they are instead my conclusions reached after consideration of the issues and values raised in the films and associated literature. They include the dialogues, and interactions of story with story, that reception theory embraces.

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[251] In Bradley's review of *Mr Darwin's Shooter*, told in the 'Introduction'.

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